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IN SMASHING FORM

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Govt., Oppn. lock horns over rise in fuel prices

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The increase in prices of petrol and diesel has triggered a fresh round of political tussle between the ruling Congress and the Opposition parties.

As the BJP is gearing up to lay siege to the official residence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday, the CM has not only strongly defended the hike in sales tax on fuel, but also attacked the Centre.

He said the State was forced to reduce taxes on petroleum products under the erstwhile "double engine" regime, while the Centre continued to collect higher Central excise duty from the State and diverted the resources to other States. This had affected Karnataka's tax collection ability, he alleged.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 4

India refuses to endorse Ukraine meet statement

Only proposals acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine can lead to peace, says New Delhi; communique calling for the protection of Ukraine's 'territorial integrity' signed by over 80 nations

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Only proposals acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine can lead to peace, said India as New Delhi decided to disassociate itself from the final document issued at the conclusion of a Peace Summit in Switzerland on Sunday.

India was among at least seven countries that refused to endorse the "Joint Communique on a Peace Framework" released in Burgenstock, the venue of the two-day summit.

The communique, which called for the protection of Ukraine's "territorial integrity" and was built on Ukraine's peace formula and the UN charter and resolutions, was thus far signed by more than 80 countries.

Swiss President Viola Amherd; Pavan Kapoor, Secretary (West), External Affairs Ministry; and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the summit on peace in Ukraine. AFP

"Our participation in the summit and continued engagement with all stakeholders is with a view to understanding different perspectives, approaches and options to find a way forward for a sustainable resolution of the conflict; in our view, only those options acceptable to both parties can lead to abiding peace," Pavan Kapoor, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the Summit, but Russian President Vladimir Putin was not invited, with Swiss officials saying Russia could join a future conference on the "road map" to peace.

Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico and the UAE were among the countries that refused to sign the communique.

Brazil maintained an observer status, and China declined the invitation to participate.

Asked about India's abstention, Swiss Ambassador to India Ralf Heckner said that despite the decision, "it was good that India was present" at a conference where the number of countries represented "half of the world" and a "quarter of the world" was represented by heads of state or government.

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SUMMIT ENDS WITH HOPE
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Pradhan says two types of irregularities noticed in NEET

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

The Union government will take the strictest action against functionaries of the National Testing Agency (NTA) if they were found to be involved in irregularities in the conduct of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate medical courses, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said in Sambalpur on Sunday.

"With regard to NEET, two types of irregularities have come to light. As per preliminary findings, some students were allotted less time than the designated duration. Alternatively, grace marks were awarded, which the government had disapproved, and [the government] directed re-examination for 1,563 students as per the Supreme Court order," he said.

Dharmendra Pradhan

"Additional wrongdoings have also come to the fore on two accounts. I assure both students and parents that the government has taken the issue very seriously. We will take it to a logical end," Mr. Pradhan said.

"A lot of reforms are required in the NTA's functioning though it is an autonomous institution. The government is examining all issues," he said.

CHEQUES RECOVERED
» PAGE 10

NEARBY

Darshan's clothes, shoes recovered

BENGALURU
The police, probing the murder of Renukaswamy, said they have recovered potentially critical evidence against actor Darshan on Sunday. The police is said to have recovered the clothes and shoes that he was wearing when the crime was committed. » Page 3

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greets its readers
on the occasion of
ID-UL-AZHA

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A BG-BGE

If Sharath, Manav and I play really well, we can definitely reach the quarterfinal and even semifinal at the Paris Olympics

I just want to go out there, play freely and play my best game in the best manner possible; I want to go far in the main singles event and if I can do that, it will give me a lot of confidence for the team event; we want to set a benchmark for the next Games

INTERVIEW

HARMEET DESAI

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Harmeet Desai is a big fan of tennis legend Rafael Nadal, who will be competing in his last Olympics in Paris.

The 30-year-old, a Commonwealth Games and Asian Games medallist, hopes to meet the 14-time French Open champion and former World No. 1 during the Olympics. "If I get a chance, I would definitely like to get a picture with him," said Harmeet, ranked 64 in the world.

A key member of the Indian table tennis team at Paris Olympics along with Sharath Kamal, Harmeet's performance will be watched with a lot of interest. As one who will be part of the men's team, singles, and maybe doubles, Harmeet knows the weight of expectations and burden on his shoulders.

"Making it to quarters of the team event will be great for the sport and am keen to make quite a few upsets in singles as well," Harmeet said.

In an exclusive interview, Harmeet speaks about India's maiden qualification as a team in Olympics, Massimo Costantini's influence, and his singles goals at Paris, amongst other things.

The team has been training for more than a week at Bengaluru. How has it been with coach Massimo Costantini?

Yeah. It has been quite good. I trained under him for the first time in 2009. And this time also, the experience has been good. The intensity he brings into the training camp is good and we've had some matches and we are practicing doubles, too. So it's been quite good to train under him again.

Massimo is known for his man-management. What have you learned from the camp?

Max (Massimo) already has the plan and in his mind he's clear. He has just started with us at the camp, but he has followed everyone's recent past, read and watched our performances on YouTube.

He has his plans for the Olympics and we have been getting good support here with the video and match analysis, too. His plan is to give us the chance to practice doubles and singles because lately I haven't played a lot of doubles with Manav Thakkar.

Doubles is very important in Olympics as it is the first match of the tie in the team event. Any special preparations?

Yeah. So, keeping that in mind, we are trying different partners. Max has planned a good roadmap till the Paris Olympics. There is huge emphasis on the roadmap.

We are focusing on tactical things because it's difficult to change something and we don't have much time, but we are working a lot on the strategic and tactical part which is helping us a lot. I last played doubles with Manav Thakkar in 2022. But I have had good results with him in the past. We won a medal in the Asian championship in 2021, but since 2022 we haven't played much. It's almost two years. Of late, Manav is partnering Manush Shah on the WTT (World Table Tennis) Tour. And I have been focusing on singles.

Manav has improved a lot in singles and doubles. And it will take a bit of time to get used to each other again. But we are practicing doubles. We are trying with different pairs because we have a healthy amount of sparing partners in the camp, and we will also get to play a couple of tournaments before Paris and get to know each other. We will have sufficient match practice going into the Olympics.

How does it feel competing in the Olympics in singles as well as the team event?

It's really a special feeling, definitely, and every athlete wants to represent their country in the Olympics. It's already been 24-25 years since I started playing table tennis. So, definitely I want to represent my country, and playing singles this time will be a cherry on the top.

The last one or two years have been really good for me, be it domestic or International. I would like to continue my form and aim to make a couple of upsets in the tournament.

What are your expectations from the team in Paris? How is the team environment?

It's the very first time that the Indian team (men & women) has qualified for the Olympics. We have beaten many top teams. For example, we beat Japan in the 2018 Asian Games for the bronze medal. If all three of us (Sharath, Manav & I) can play really good table tennis – Manav has been quite consistent in the recent past – we can definitely reach the quarterfinals, and if our form is really good, we can also make it to semifinals.

Now tell me about your singles form. You had some good victories over top 20 players, especially in the WTT Contender in Lagos in 2023 and the World team championships in February 2024. What are the aspects you're focusing on in the camp?

I am trying to make my strengths even sharper and make it inconvenient for my opponent to play. My goal will be to try and create a few upsets. The bigger aim is to focus more and more on my confidence and on my tactics going into the Olympics.

Can you shed some more light on the camp?

We are working on doubles, as I said. Individually I'm working a lot on my service return and first-ball return. That will be the main thing in the high pressure matches at Paris.

How do you see Sathiyan's absence in the team since he is the fourth member?

Sathiyan will be with us. As you know, he's going to Paris as the fourth player, but we won't have the option of playing him. We definitely will miss Sathiyan. But like I said earlier, Manav has been doing quite well. He has been constantly beating top 100 players in the recent past. He played really well in Lebanon, and also many other WTT contender and Feeder tournaments. I'm very optimistic that we can make an impact in Paris.

Earlier, there had been controversies regarding personal and official coaches during National camps. What is your take on it?

I think it has been managed quite well because there are personal coaches in the camp now. Aman Balgu (personal coach of Manika Batra) and Somnath Ghosh (personal coach of Sreeja Akula) are there in the camp. So, there are personal coaches and the balance has been set quite well. Ultimately, it is Max who calls the shots.

The Indian team is making its debut at Paris. What does this mean for players of your generation and next?

It's the first time ever that there are two Indian athletes almost ranked in the Top 40 in the women's section. For the first time in the history, we have four male players almost in the top 60 (fourth player Sathiyan is 70 now) of the world rankings. This kind of achievement will help the sport to grow and attract more youngsters. There are so many good things happening: there is the UTT league and the support we are getting from the State Governments, the Khelo India, and TOPS scheme. Many corporates are coming to the sport. I think there is scope to grow.

Sharath Kamal has been the team's leader for more than a decade. He will be competing in his fifth Olympics. Do you see him more as a competitor or as a mentor. How is your relationship with the veteran paddler?

When we are in the team, I don't look at him as a competitor. It's quite inspiring and also there are so many things to learn from him even when we are practising. It's really good that he can share his experience. It's important to support and help each other, and learn from each other. That's my point of view.

This is your debut Olympics. Are you feeling the pressure?

No. Playing the Olympics is very special for every sportsperson as they are representing their country. But I have played three Commonwealth Games, one Asian Games, and three Asian championships. So, this is not new to me. Representing the country in the Olympics has been my dream. I just want to go there and play my best and bring laurels for the country.

What are your immediate thoughts on Olympics?

I just want to go out there, play freely and play my best game in the best manner possible. If I can make couple of upsets in the singles event because our matches start with singles followed by the team events. I want to go far in the main singles event and if, if I can do that, it will give me a lot of confidence for the team event, and I hope that we can make it to the men's team quarterfinals. This would set a benchmark for the next Olympics.

Cashless travel via ETMs on KSRTC buses in two months

The introduction of electronic ticketing machines is part of the corporation's broader effort to embrace digital solutions and improve service for its passengers, according to Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

The hassle of carrying cash for passengers and finding change for conductors will soon come to an end as the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) will introduce electronic ticketing machines (ETMs) in two months. These machines allow passengers to pay through UPI, debit/credit cards, and other cashless modes.

According to officials, KSRTC has already started the process of implementing ETMs in its buses. Within the next two months, bus conductors will be equipped with ETMs capable of accepting Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and other cashless transaction modes.

"This move is aimed at resolving the common problem of passengers not having exact change and the subsequent inconvenience for both passengers and conductors. With the new system, passengers can easily pay using digital platforms such as Google Pay, PhonePe, and Paytm, or any other UPI payment methods and debit or credit cards ensuring a smoother and more efficient transaction process. This initiative is expected to enhance the overall travel experience and reduce disputes related to cash payments. Additionally, the introduction of ETMs is part of KSRTC's broader effort to embrace digital solutions and improve service for its passengers," Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy told *The Hindu*.

A conductor issuing tickets to passengers at the KSRTC bus stand at the temple town of Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala in Dakshina Kannada. H.S. MANJUNATH

EbixCash Ltd. secured a long-term contract to implement the Intelligent Transport Management System for KSRTC. The firm will initially install 10,245 ETMs across 8,000 buses, with plans to install an additional 15,000 devices over the next five years.

Recently, EbixCash Ltd. secured a long-term contract to implement the Intelligent Transport Management System (ITMS) for KSRTC.

Under this agreement, EbixCash Ltd. will be responsible for conceptualizing, developing, constructing, installing, maintaining, operating, and transitioning to the ITMS for all state-operated buses under KSRTC. "The initial phase of this contract spans five years and involves the deployment of EbixCash bus exchange solutions, which include digital payment capabilities aligned with KSRTC's operational guidelines," a senior KSRTC official said.

The firm will initially install 10,245 ETMs across 8,000 buses, with plans to install an additional 15,000 devices over the next five years. "The ITMS aims to fully automate fare ticketing and collection, incorporating ETMs and related software. This system is expected to streamline operations and address the long-standing request from passengers for cashless transactions in bus ticketing," the official added.

Smart cards for Shakti scheme beneficiaries

Mr. Reddy said that if KSRTC starts issuing smart cards for Shakti scheme beneficiaries, that too can be incorporated into the system. The State government is yet to issue the smart cards intended for the beneficiaries. According to Mr. Reddy, smart card issuance has been stalled due to the absence of ETMs.

Currently, only Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) buses, particularly the airport buses, accept cashless payments.

What the customers say

"These days, most people typically don't carry cash and prefer using UPI payments.

However, the necessity of cash for bus fares poses a significant inconvenience as obtaining change can be challenging. It's good that KSRTC is finally introducing cashless options, which should have been implemented long ago," Harsha Kumar, a regular KSRTC passenger from BTM Layout.

Another passenger, Ravi Prasad from Koramangala, said, "Even though there's an online booking option available, when I need to travel to my native place Mysuru urgently, I usually catch the bus directly from the Satellite Bus Station. However, I often face the inconvenience of needing cash for bus fare. ATMs dispense only ₹500 notes, and conductors sometimes refuse to provide change, leading to frustrating situations. Introducing ETMs with cashless payment options would greatly benefit passengers like me."

BMTC conducts survey for feeder bus routes for upcoming Yellow Line

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Officials have said that they will conduct another study once the Yellow Line stretch is opened for commuters. FILE PHOTO

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has conducted a survey for the feeder bus routes of the Bengaluru Metro's Yellow Line, which is set to begin commercial operations by this year end.

The BMTC officials stated that a survey is being conducted to identify metro feeder service routes for the upcoming Yellow Line of Namma Metro. "The feeder services are among the most used services in the BMTC, benefiting commuters who use the metro in the city. Therefore, we have decided to extend the feeder service to the Yellow Line stretch, and the relevant route study has been done," an official said.

Officials further mentioned that they will conduct another study once the Yellow Line stretch is opened for commuters.

Despite the July 2024 deadline stipulated in the State budget presented in February for the launch of the Yellow Line of Namma Metro in Bengaluru, Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) officials previously indicated that the line might not be operational until the end of the year due to a lack of trains.

The under-construction 18.82-km Yellow Line connects R.V. Road with Bommasandra. This fully elevated metro route includes 16 stations, linking with the Green Line at R.V. Road station and with the Pink Line at Jayadeva Hospital station. The primary objective of the Yellow Line is to enhance connectivity to regions housing major companies such as Infosys and Biocon, as well as to South Bengaluru.

"This line is poised to significantly alleviate the daily challenges faced by Bengaluru's metro commuters. Moreover, it will augment the overall metro connectivity in the city, contributing to a more convenient and efficient commuting experience. The commissioning of this line is expected to profoundly impact the lives of Bengaluru's metro commuters, providing them with a more comfortable and efficient service. The BMTC feeder service will greatly help metro commuters by addressing first and last mile connectivity issues," a BMRCL official said.

READER'S MAIL

Kannadigas should get their fair share of jobs

Sir, – I refer to the report 'State mulls over 100% quota for Kannadigas in 'C'&'D' group jobs in private industries.'
Authorities have always been talking about according priority to Kannadigas in jobs for a long time.
The report giving preference to Kannadigas in employment is decades-old and precious little has been done to better the situation on this score. Committees have been formed and Bills have either been passed or tabled. Over the years Kannada and Kannadigas have not received the attention that is due to them in their home state. Examples that come to mind immediately in this regard are public sector banks and Central government establishments.
Reservations for Kannadigas at least for 'C'& 'D' group jobs will be a welcome move if strictly implemented, including in the private sector. Our authorities must ensure a fair and level playing field for Kannadigas for their rightful share of jobs. This is not against others getting jobs but to ensure that locals too get their due share.

H.N. Ramakrishna
Bengaluru

Better park equipment maintenance is a must

Sir, –The government's recent announcement that all public parks in the city would henceforth be open seventeen hours daily is a welcome and long-awaited move.
Simultaneously, it should establish a special administrative structure to maintain the parks as well. Almost all of these parks now feature distinct areas for children to play. However, the play equipment installed there perpetually remain in pathetic conditions, due to their poor quality, improper and excessive use, and a lack of periodic maintenance; as a result, innocent children using them are prone to bodily injuries. With the new regulation, footfall in the parks will grow dramatically. The government should hence ensure that the play equipment gets periodical repair and replacement and the area is always free of pebbles and fallen tree residue.

Kamal Laddha
Bengaluru

New road but old problems persist

Sir, – The redesigned Gandhi Bazaar Road in Basavanagudi has left little space for vehicles to move. Parking violations, with vehicles blocking lanes, is rampant. Two-wheelers are found parked on footpaths. Some vendors have their carts on the road. Footpaths are littered with garbage, even though the pourikramas are doing their job of clearing the mess. Dog owners also do not clean up after their pets on footpaths. The authorities need to check traffic violations, garbage creators and pet dog walkers to make the road worth the redesign.

G. Padmanabhan
Bengaluru

Readers can write to: letters.bangalore @thehindu.co.in

Monsoon hues

A rainbow captured after a spell of rain at Padmanabhanagar in Bengaluru on Sunday. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

Road rage: Gang kills man near Hoskote

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A youth was hacked to death by a gang allegedly over an incident of road rage near Hoskote on National Highway 75 on the outskirts of the city in the wee hours of Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as Naveen Nayak, 27, a resident of Gangapura village, Hoskote taluk, who traded in vegetables.

According to the police, Naveen and one of his employees were on their way to Hoskote vegetable market in the wee hours of Sunday in his van, when he got into an argument with a gang of four persons in another car when they tried to overtake him from the wrong side.

Police sources said that CCTV footage from multiple cameras on the route show that for over 10 km, the two vehicles overtook each other. When Naveen stopped his vehicle near a dhaba on the highway for coffee, the gang of four in the other car also stopped and hacked him to death with lethal weapons, police said. Naveen's employee who was with him fled from the scene and efforts are on to track him down.

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2. Dilipan.P, Thiruvallur
3. G.R. Prajan, Chennai

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My client **Smt. Asharani Naik W/O Sunil Naik,** aged about 44 years, residing at No.46, 1st Main Road, KEB Layout, MR Garden, Geddalahalli, Bangalore 560094, has not been able to trace the Original Documents of property located in Tumkur Town Ward No. 25 Siddaganga Layout bearing Site No. 102 and Site No. 103; Katha No. 2549:2550:419, East-West (North Side) measuring 42 Feet; (South Side) measuring 48 feet; North-South measuring 52 Feet; totally measuring 2340 Sq. Ft; SCHEDULE: **East:** Site No. 111 & 124; **West:** Road; **North:** Road; **South:** Site No. 104 **(1)** Sale Deed Bearing Registration No. 1894/1990-91, Dated 11/06/1990 Vol: 2977; Pages: 173-175 executed at the office of the sub-registrar Tumkur **(2)** Sale Deed Bearing Registration No. 6787/1991-92, Dated 27/02/1992 Vol: 3107; Pages: 59-61 executed at the office of the sub-registrar Tumkur **(3)** Sale Deed Bearing Registration No. 3644/1996-97, Dated 28/09/1996 Vol: 3469; Pages: 29-31 executed at the office of the sub-registrar Tumkur **(4)** Sale Deed Bearing Registration No. TMK-1-13154-2010-11, CD No. TMKD335, Dated 05/03/2011executed at the office of the sub-registrar Tumkur **(5)** Partition Deed bearing registration NO. PNY-1-04035-2017-18 CD No. PNYD666 Dated: 29/08/2017 registered at the office of the sub-registrar Peenya Bangalore **(6)** DTD bearing registration No. TMK-1-04608-2019-20 CD NO. TMKD976 Dated: 25/06/2019 Registered at the office of the sub-registrar Tumkur. **(7)** DTD bearing Registration No. GAN-1-05414-2020-21 CD No. GAND898 Dated : 19/03/2021 registered at the office of the Sub-Registrar Gandhinagar Bangalore. **(8)** Discharge Deed bearing registration No. MLS-1-03019-2022-23 CD No. MSLD1153 Dated: 31/12/2022 registered at the office of the Sub-Registrar Malleshwaram Bangalore
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Indirect evidence builds, yet the 'dark' universe remains murky

By mapping the position of thousands of galaxies over many years, we can keep measuring how much the universe's expansion is accelerating due to dark energy. But for now, we have no choice but to draw all our inferences about dark matter and dark energy from indirect evidence alone

Qudsia Gani

The general theory of relativity has been very successful at explaining gravity and an astonishing array of other related phenomena, such as gravitational waves, gravitational lensing, gravitational red shift, the existence of black holes, and time dilation. This theory refines Isaac Newton's laws and provides a unified description of gravity as a geometric property of spacetime.

We have observed gravity operating at different scales, from microscopic to macroscopic. But as we zoom out to look at the universe as a whole, it seems as if space is permeated with a mysterious form of gravity-defying energy. This so-called dark energy – which physicists have come to believe is made up 70% of energy that the Big Bang blew out 13.8 billion years ago – creates a sort of negative pressure that stretches the fabric of spacetime and allows celestial objects like stars and galaxies to drift apart. This is in contrast to the Newtonian idea of gravity: as an attractive force that causes objects to come closer together.

In places with lots of matter, gravity has more of an effect than dark energy. But when space is empty of matter, dark energy dominates.

A 'hidden' universe

Similarly, based on some cosmological observations, researchers have proposed the presence of an invisible form of matter called dark matter. In fact, 44 years ago this month, astronomer Vera Rubin published her famous paper with indirect evidence about the need for dark matter.

Theories of gravity say the rotation rate is highest near the galaxies' centre and lowest at the outer rim. Yet scientists like Dr. Rubin found many rotating galaxies in which the velocities of the stars didn't decrease away from the galactic centre. One way to explain this is if the galaxy had more matter than was visible, exerting more gravitational force that pushed stars at the rim to move faster than they would otherwise. This additional matter is dark matter.

Both dark matter and dark energy are assumptions. They have a very strong hypothetical basis but we haven't been able to find physical evidence of them. Scientists postulated the existence of these two entities so that they can explain their observations without having to break the general theory of relativity.

Not all scientists agree with this approach. Some have attempted to create an alternate paradigm of gravity – one in which some unknown properties of the force could cause the observed phenomena without invoking dark matter or dark energy.

The Bullet Cluster formed after the collision of two large clusters of galaxies. Most of the matter in the clusters (blue) is clearly separate from the normal matter (pink), indicating that nearly all of the matter in the clusters is dark. NASA/CXC/CFA/M. MARKEVITCH

However, these alternatives suffer from an important problem: they don't explain away all the disparities, whereas the dark matter and dark energy hypotheses do.

What have we found?

If we need to fully understand the general theory of relativity, we need to figure out what dark matter and dark energy are. Many researchers are working on this around the world, including in India.

Their studies make heavy use of simulations to understand how the universe would look if there were certain kinds of dark matter or dark energy. For example, a study published on April 16 in the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* by researchers in the U.S. reported being able to explain the observed behaviour of real galaxies and the motions of their stars and gases in simulations that assumed the galaxies contain dark matter.

We also have telescopes constantly making new observations of space. They have been becoming more sophisticated, allowing scientists to collect more fine-tuned data they can use to improve their theories.

For example, an April 11 paper in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters* reported that the James Webb Space Telescope had observed indirect evidence of normal regular and dark matter in the ring of an old galaxy named JWST-ER1g.

> The general theory of relativity refines Isaac Newton's laws and provides a unified description of gravity as a geometric property of spacetime

When looking for something that is really hard to find, it's also useful if researchers share information about where they *couldn't* find dark matter, allowing others to focus on places where it can be. On March 28, for example, scientists published the first results of the Broadband Search for Dark Photon Dark Matter (BREAD) experiment. The preliminary data ruled out dark-matter particles in a certain mass range.

Turning on lambda

Similarly, the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI) in Arizona, in the U.S., is attempting to make the largest 3D map of the universe.

This mountain-top telescope is fitted with 5,000 small robots that help it look 11 billion years into the past with greater precision than before.

So far, data from DESI has agreed at a basic level with the λCDM model of the universe, our best mathematical model to explain the Big Bang and the universe today. 'CDM' is short for 'cold dark matter'.

λ (lambda) is the cosmological constant: it represents the energy density of space and is closely associated with dark energy. It appears in equations of the general theory of relativity. Some studies have found that dark energy might be changing with time, which is at odds with assumptions of the CDM model.

In fact, λ also makes a surprising appearance in the modified theories of gravity that some researchers have been working on. One of them is MOND, an acronym of 'modified Newtonian dynamics'. It doesn't require the existence of dark energy; instead, it proposes that when gravity is weak, such as at the outer rims of large galaxies, it also behaves differently. While it enjoys some popularity, one research group reported on April 5 that data from the Cassini mission (1997-2017) showed no sign that Saturn's orbit had a slight deviation that MOND says there should be.

By mapping the position of thousands of galaxies over many years, we can keep measuring how much the universe's expansion is accelerating due to dark energy. But for now, we have no choice but to draw all our inferences about dark matter and dark energy from indirect evidence alone.

(Qudsia Gani is an assistant professor in the Department of Physics, Government Degree College Pattan, Baramulla.)

THE GIST

Dark energy apparently creates a negative pressure that stretches the fabric of spacetime and allows celestial objects to drift apart. In places with lots of matter, gravity has more of an effect than dark energy. But when space is empty of matter, dark energy dominates

Scientists found that in many rotating galaxies the velocities of stars didn't decrease away from the centre. One explanation is that the galaxy has more matter than visible, exerting gravitational force that pushes stars at the rim to move faster. This additional matter is dark matter

Dark matter and dark energy are assumptions. They have a very strong hypothetical basis but no physical evidence of them has been found. Scientists postulated the existence of these two entities so that they can explain their observations without having to break the general theory of relativity

BIG SHOT

Paris resident Vincent displays a 3D printed rocket wing he made at home on June 1. These parts are meant for the Ukrainian military. A few French people have been making 3D-printed military equipment on a voluntary basis and aiding Ukraine outside of official channels. Items being printed include periscopes, grenade casings, and drone parts. AFP

WHAT IS IT?

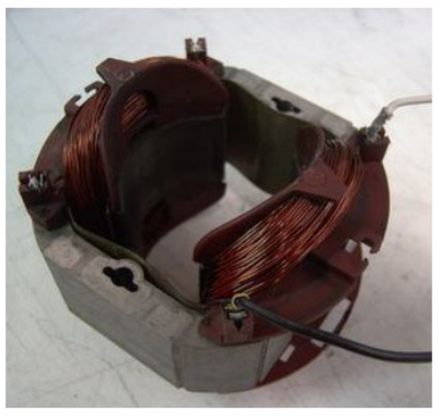
Electromagnet: driven by current

The Hindu Bureau

Invented in 1824 by the British physicist William Sturgeon, electromagnets are a fixture of modern life, appearing in loudspeakers, motors, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines, maglev trains, and particle accelerators.

When an electric current flows through a wire, it creates a magnetic field around the wire. So when the wire is coiled, the magnetic field becomes concentrated in the coil's hole. This is an electromagnet: a device in which an electric current produces the magnetic field. When the wire is coiled around a magnetic material, the material — called the core — amplifies the strength of the magnetic field.

This is because ferromagnetic metals like iron already contain small magnetic fields inside their bulk produced by its atoms. Because these fields point in random directions, the fields cancel themselves out. When the iron is used as the core in an electromagnet and a current is passed, the magnetic field it produces penetrates the iron's bulk and forces the tiny fields to align along the external field's direction. This way, the domains' fields add to the external field, producing a stronger field overall.



The stator of a vacuum cleaner showing two electromagnets. MARRRCI (CC BY-SA 3.0)

A magnetic field will be produced as long as a current flows through the coil. When the current is switched off, some core materials remain weakly magnetised. In a superconducting electromagnet, such as in an MRI, superconducting wire is coiled around a core to produce magnetic fields of up to 30 tesla (600,000-times as powerful as the earth's). In Bitter electromagnets, current flows in wires coiled through a helical stack of electromagnets, producing magnetic fields of up to 40 tesla.

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with the subject 'Daily page'

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, JUN. 17		
RISE	05:54	SET 18:47
RISE	14:43	SET 01:58
TUESDAY, JUN. 18		
RISE	05:54	SET 18:48
RISE	15:32	SET 02:34
WEDNESDAY, JUN. 19		
RISE	05:55	SET 18:48
RISE	16:25	SET 03:16

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	32	25
Mysuru	31	22
Bengaluru	30	21

Bengaluru Today
29°C Morning will be pleasant Day will be slight warm and humid. Spell of light rain and thundershower is likely to occur. Night will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
30°C The weather will be slight warm and humid Spell of light rain and thundershower with gusty winds may occur.

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THE HINDU
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Police recover clothes, shoes Darshan wore on the night of Renukaswamy's murder

The Chitradurga resident was allegedly beaten up badly. From the statements of the other accused in the case, the police claim that Darshan himself tortured the deceased

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru police, probing the murder of Renukaswamy, who was allegedly tortured and killed by a gang including Kannada actor Darshan, said they have recovered potentially critical evidence against the actor on Sunday. The police is said to have recovered the clothes and shoes that the actor was wearing when the crime was committed.

The police conducted mahazar at the residences of Darshan and his close friend Pavithra Gowda – both in R.R. Nagar. Renukaswamy, a Darshan fan, had allegedly sent obscene messages to Pavithra leading to his death. The police seized the clothes and shoes both were allegedly wearing during the crime from their respective houses, sources said.

Renukaswamy was allegedly beaten up badly and tortured. From the statements of other accused in the case, the police claim that Darshan himself tortured him. The police hope that the clothes and the shoes may have some traces of the victim's blood or tissue, which, if found, will be crucial evidence that Darshan himself assaulted the victim, said sources. Darshan has been claiming that while he did meet the victim at the shed, he warned him not to send obscene messages henceforth and left the scene and he was not aware of the murder.

The police sealing a private garage where Renukaswamy, a Darshan fan, was allegedly tortured and murdered at Pattanagere, Rajarajeshwari Nagar, in Bengaluru recently. K. MURALI KUMAR

Investigations have revealed that Pavithra allegedly assaulted the victim Renukaswamy with her slippers, making it one of the key pieces of evidence in the case. The police have now sent the clothes and shoes of both Darshan and Pavithra for forensic examination to the Forensic Science Laboratory in Madiwala.

The police are expected to take Darshan to Mysuru on Monday to conduct a spot mahazar of the place where he allegedly held multiple meetings with those involved in the crime and hatched the plan to cover it up, by sending four of his associates to surrender before the police.

Search on for other evidence in case
Meanwhile, the police are also searching for an electric water heater that was allegedly used to brand the victim Renukaswamy and administer electric shocks to him.

Gold chain
This was allegedly thrown away by the accused en route to Mysuru. A search is also on for a gold chain Renkaswamy was wearing, which one of the accused allegedly took before throwing his body into a stormwater drain in Kamakshipalya.

The driver Ravi, who drove Renukaswamy from Chitradurga to Bengaluru, surrendered with two of his associates Jagadeesh and Anu Kumar.

Ravi reportedly told the police that Jagadeesh took away the gold chain on the neck of the victim before disposing of the body.

History sheeter arrested

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The city police arrested history sheeter Varun alias Medda, 27, of Srinagar and booked him under the stringent Goonda Act.

This is the third history sheeter against whom the city police have invoked the Act in less than a week. The police had arrested Ashok Kumar Adiga, 59, of Basaveshwara Nagar, and Manoj Kumar, 26, of Kodigehalli under the Act two days ago.

Varun has allegedly been involved in multiple offences including murder, attempt to murder, robbery, assault and drug peddling. With a view that his criminal activities couldn't be controlled without stringent action, Police Commissioner B. Dayananda ordered him to be booked under the Goonda Act.

BBMP to move court to get stay vacated to clear encroachments in Rajarajeshwari Nagar

Shreyas H.S.
BENGALURU

After nearly eight years, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is set to move court to vacate the stay brought by arrested Kannada actor Darshan and others to stop them from demolishing structures encroaching the buffer zone and stormwater drain.

BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath told *The Hindu*, "A preliminary check on the status to know what happened to clearing encroachment of buffer zone by Darshan's residence and others found that the stay is still existing in the High Court (HC). The BBMP in the next working day will move the court to vacate the stay."

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Head Office. FILE PHOTO

In 2016, after the then Chief Minister Siddaramiah-led Congress government ordered the BBMP to carry out anti-encroachment drive, the BBMP executed a survey of the drains to identify encroachments. A report prepared by the Joint Director (Land Records) revealed that actor Darshan's house in R.R. Nagar was built on the buffer zone of a primary drain. Then, the Revenue Department issued notices to demolish the house along with 67 other properties in Ideal Homes Layout, including the Shamanur Shivashankarappa hospital. About 15 days time was given to to the actor.

N.R. Ramesh, former councillor whose complaint prompted action against Ideal Homes Layout, said after notices were issued in September, 2016, Darshan and others went to the civic court first and secured stay. They then moved High Court and got the demolition process stayed in October 2016. The BBMP did not file a caveat.

Mr. Ramesh said Darshan' house is built just 7 feet away from the primary drain. As per the rule, no structure should be built within 150 meters. "It is unfortunate that the BBMP did not do any work to vacate the stay. However, in 2016, several houses belonging to the poor and middle class were demolished. The BBMP should practise impartiality in the drive," he alleged.

Justice to victim's family is important: Sudeep

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Sudeep

Leading Kannada actor Sudeep, reacting for the first time to his co-star Darshan being arrested in a murder case, said everyone's focus must be on "justice to the victim's family".

"A man has died and the law will take its course," he said.

When asked for his opinion on calls for the film industry to ban Darshan, he said there was no point in the film industry taking a "stand" and whenever it did so, it had backfired earlier.

"If he comes out of this clean, there is no question of a ban on him. And if he is in jail, there is no need for a ban," he said.

He further said that of late the Kannada film industry had been mired in many unsavoury controversies and the film industry "needed a clean chit soon".

After multiple disruptions Kannada Sahitya Sammelana to be held in Mandya in December

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

The Kannada Sahitya Parishat has decided to hold the 87th Akhila Bharatha Kannada Sahitya Sammelana (Literature festival) on December 21, 22, and 23 in Mandya, which was scheduled earlier and postponed due to severe drought, parliamentary elections and other reasons.

This decision was taken at the executive meeting of Kannada Sahitya Parishat held in Kemmannugundi recently.

The literature festival, which was planned to be held in June earlier, was postponed to December due to heavy rains and lack of necessary preparations, among other reasons.

Mahesh Joshi, President of Kannada Sahitya Parishath, has written a letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Shivaraj Thangadagi, Minister of Kannada and Culture and N. Cheluvarayaswamy, District in-charge Minister of Mandya to take necessary action to hold the conference in December.

"A letter has been written to the Chief Minister asking him to call a meeting to finalise the date of the literature festival. The Chief Minister is expected to call a meeting soon and preparations for the literature festival will begin as soon as the date is finalised," said Mr. Joshi to *The Hindu*.

Plans to hold 87th Kannada Sahitya Sammelan scheduled in Mandya have faced multiple disruptions. Earlier, the Kannada Sahitya Parishat had started preparations to hold a conference in February.

A file photo of the Kannada Sahitya Parishat building.

The literature festival, which was planned in June earlier, was postponed to December because of various reasons

However, due to lack of rain in 2023, the State government had declared 223 taluks across the state, including Mandya, as drought-hit taluks. The Parishath had postponed the literature festival indefinitely.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who held a meeting on February 1, 2024, with the parishat and its office-bearers, directed them to make necessary preparations to hold the conference by the first week of June. However, after the announcement of the parliamentary elections on April 1, 2024, the State government got completely engrossed in the polls. The election code of conduct hindered the release of funds.

After all the processes of the elections were completed on June 6, the Kannada Sahitya Parishat decided to initiate the activities of the literature festival.

Funds not yet released
Mr. Joshi has submitted a memorandum to the government to provide a grant of ₹30 crore for the literature festival. However, the State government had announced only ₹5 crore for the activities of the Kannada Sahitya Parishath in the State budget and has not announced or released any grant for the literature festival.

"Last time, the State Government announced ₹25 crore in the budget for the literature festival and released the money. This year, I requested the government to release fund of ₹30 crore for the 87th Kannada literature festival. However, the government has not announced the grant in the Budget. Instead, the Chief Minister has promised to provide adequate funds," said Mr. Joshi.

"I have already discussed the matter of holding the literature festival in December with Minister Chaluvarayaswamy. Now it is the monsoon season. In November, the Golden Jubilee of Mysore state being renamed as 'Karnataka' is being celebrated. So, December is ideal for the literature festival. Many non-resident Indians (NRI) have also urged us to hold the Literature festival in December. So, it will be more convenient for those coming to the conference from abroad," he added.

25th anniversary of Kargil Diwas: Bike expedition flagged off

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Southern team of the Delta 5 Expedition, an extensive pan-India motorcycle odyssey by the Indian Army to commemorate the 25 anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas was flagged off towards Anantapur from Bengaluru on Sunday.

The team has embarked on a expedition to the Kargil War Memorial in Dras, traversing through Manali in Himachal Pradesh, Sarchu, and Nyoma in Ladakh, traversing nearly 4,000 kilometers by road in homage to the spirit and dedication of the Indian Army.

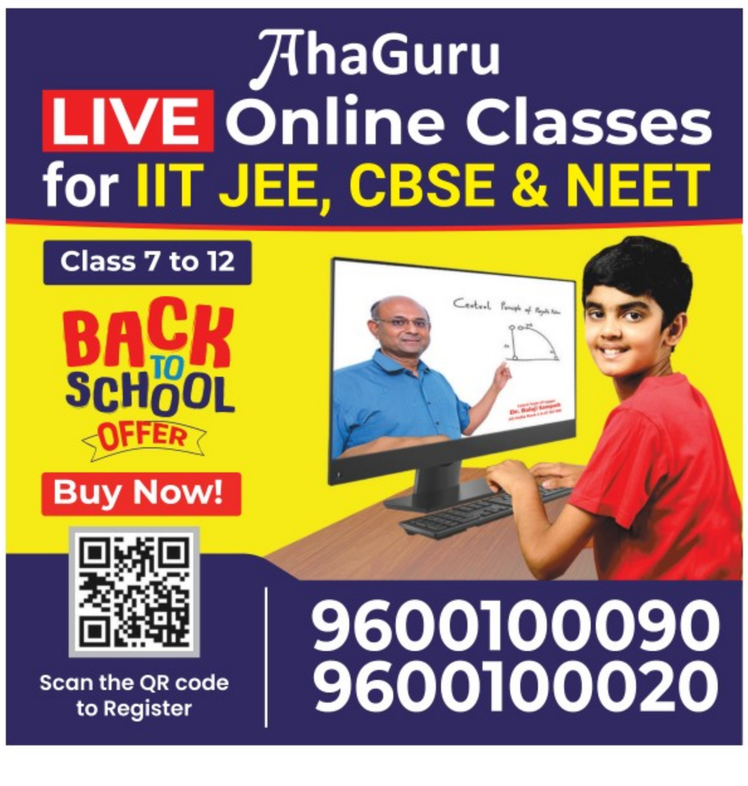
The motorcycle expedition to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas being flagged off in Bengaluru on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"The riders will traverse the length and breadth of the country, carrying with them narratives of valour, sacrifice and patriotism. Their journey stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of our war heroes, the Regiment of Artillery and the Indian Army," stated the Ministry of Defence

It added that the expedition is being carried out by riders on Hero Moto Corp's Maverick and Xpulse bikes, supported by HPCL by providing fuel for the complete expedition and medical support by Apollo Hospitals.

The team arrived in Bengaluru on June 14 from Dhanushkodi and was formally flagged In at Chanakya Auditorium of Rashtriya Military School, where a ceremonial programme was convened to honour the Kargil Veer Naris and war heroes residing in and around Bengaluru. Seven Kargil Veer Naris and seven Chakra Series awardees were honoured.

On June 15, the team visited the ISRO facility in Bengaluru, where they were briefed by ISRO scientists.



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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The amount pumped into Indian equities by FPIs in the past week

11,730 in ₹ crore. Foreign investors made a strong comeback in the week ending on July 14, driven by positive signals from domestic and global markets. The net inflow was in stark contrast to the net outflow of ₹14,794 crore witnessed in the preceding week from June 3-7, according to depositories data. PTI

Nations seeking Kyiv's territorial integrity as basis for peace

80 countries. The joint communique capped a two-day conference in Switzerland marked by the absence of Russia, which was not invited, but that many attendees hoped could join in on a roadmap to peace. About 100 delegations, mostly Western countries but also some key developing nations, were on hand for the conference. AP

Number of child labourers rescued from MP distillery

58 The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights in collaboration with the Association of Voluntary Action rescued 39 boys and 19 girls from Som Distillery in M.P.'s Raisen district. The children were transported in a school bus and worked 12-14 hours in the distillery daily. They bore burn wounds from exposure to harsh chemicals and alcohol. PTI

Rise in India's coal imports in April: mjunction

13.2 in percentage. India's coal import rose to 26.10 million tonne (MT) in April 2024 as buyers took fresh positions amid early onset of summer. The country had imported 23.05 MT of coal in the year-ago period, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services ltd. India's coal import rose by 7.7% to 268.24 MT in FY24. PTI

Number of accounts added to MF industry in April-May FY25

81 lakh. The mutual fund industry has added above 80 lakh investors' accounts in the first two months of the current fiscal (Financial Year Y25), mainly due to consistent marketing efforts, celebrity endorsements and dedicated work of the distribution network. Experts say the industry will continue to see decent growth. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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On the size of council of ministers

What has been the composition of the Council of Ministers at the Centre and in States since India became a democracy? What were the instances when the council became too large and unwieldy? How were the laws brought in to rein in this trend?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R

The story so far:
The Union Council of Ministers (COM) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was sworn in on June 9, 2024. The present COM consists of the Prime Minister, 30 Cabinet Ministers, 5 Ministers of State (MoS) with independent charge and 36 MoS.

Who constitutes the Council of Ministers?
India is a parliamentary democracy with the President as its nominal head. Article 74 of the Constitution provides that there shall be a COM headed by the Prime Minister (PM) to aid and advise the President. The real executive powers lie with the COM. A Minister should be a member of either the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha and if not, should become one within six months of his/her appointment. A similar setup prevails in States with a COM headed by the Chief Minister (CM).

The COM consists of a Cabinet minister, MoS with independent charge, MoS and a Deputy Minister. The Constitution does not classify the members of the COM into different ranks. All this has been done informally, following the British practice. Cabinet Ministers are higher in rank and handle large portfolios while MoS assist the Cabinet Ministers and work under them. MoS with independent charge directly reports to the Prime Minister for their respective ministries.

What is the constitutional limit?
The first COM at the time of independence had only 15 Ministers headed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. After the first general elections in 1952, Nehru inducted around 30 Ministers into his COM. Over the years, the size of the COM had gradually increased to around 50-60. Interestingly, it is the United Front governments led by Deve Gowda (June 1996) and I.K. Gujral (April 1997) that were sworn in with just 21 and 34 Ministers respectively. In 1999, when Atal Bihari Vajpayee became Prime Minister, his COM had 74 Ministers. However, the size of COM was becoming unwieldy in some of the larger States. For instance, in 2002 when Mayawati was the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, she had 79 Ministers.

Number game: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, left, with his Council of Ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on June 9. AFP

The National Commission to review the working of the Constitution under the Chairmanship of Justice Venkatachaliah set up in February 2000, had suggested a ceiling of 10% of the total strength of Lok Sabha/Legislative Assembly for the number of Ministers at the Centre/State level. Finally, through the 91st Constitutional Amendment in 2003, the total number of Ministers including PM/CM in the COM was limited to 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha/State Legislative Assembly. There is no minimum requirement at the Central level whereas even the smaller States should have a minimum of 12 Ministers. For Union Territories of NCT of Delhi and Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), the maximum limit is 10% of the total strength of its Assembly.

What are the issues?
A thorny issue even after the limit on the number of Ministers is the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries in various States. The office of Parliamentary Secretary (PS) also has its origin in the British system. In India, the post of PS was first created in 1951. They have not been a regular feature in the Central governments thereafter and the last PS at the Centre was appointed in 1990. However, various States have continued with their appointment to circumvent the limit on COM placed by the 91st Amendment. High Courts of Punjab & Haryana, Rajasthan, Bombay, Calcutta, Telangana, Karnataka etc. have quashed or questioned the appointment of PS in the States under their jurisdiction for indirectly violating the maximum limit on COM. The Supreme Court in July 2017 had also declared a law passed by Assam in 2004 for the appointment of PS as unconstitutional. The most recent instance is the order of the Himachal Pradesh High Court in January 2024 that restrained six PS appointed in the State from functioning as Ministers or availing facilities provided to Ministers. Appointing MLAs to the position of Ministers under the guise of PS to circumvent constitutional limits should be strictly prohibited and discontinued.

It is also pertinent to note that States like Sikkim, Goa and smaller States in the northeastern region with a current estimated population ranging from seven to forty lakhs have a minimum of twelve Ministers. However, Union Territories of Delhi and J&K with estimated population of over 2 crore and 1.5 crore, can have only a maximum of seven and nine Ministers respectively. The administration of public order, police and land in Delhi is not with the Delhi government. Similarly, public order and the police of Jammu and Kashmir will not be with its government. Nevertheless, considering the population of these Union Territories, the 10% limit for their COM may be reconsidered.

Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer. He currently trains civil-service aspirants. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

- The present Council of Ministers consists of the Prime Minister, 30 Cabinet Ministers, 5 Ministers of State (MoS) with independent charge and 36 MoS
- The first COM at the time of independence had only 15 Ministers headed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. When the council started expanding, through the 91st Constitutional amendment in 2003, the total number of Ministers including PM/CM in the COM was limited to 15% of the total strength of Lok Sabha/State Legislative Assembly.
- A thorny issue even after the limit on number of ministers is the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries in various States. Courts have stepped in multiple times to restrain States from appointing PS to circumvent the constitutional limit set for the number of Ministers

What is SWM cess and why is it levied on waste generators?

How has the SWM cess fared so far and why has it hit the headlines suddenly? How has Bengaluru been handling its solid waste management and what is about to change going forward?

Pushkara S.V.

The story so far:
The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahangara Palike (BBMP) has proposed a Solid Waste Management (SWM) Cess of ₹100 per month for each household. While the proposal has sparked debate and criticism among residents and stakeholders, it is important to understand the rationale behind SWM cess, its intended use, and the broader context of solid waste management challenges faced by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in India.

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) levy user fees or SWM cess as per the provisions of Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. According to these guidelines, ULBs must collect user fees/cess for SWM services provisions provided. ULBs typically charge about ₹30-50 per month as SWM cess, which is collected along with property tax. ULBs are now considering revising these rates and imposing higher charges on bulk waste generators to meet a portion of the costs incurred in providing SWM services.

What are the costs?
Offering SWM services is complex and resource-intensive. ULBs typically deploy about 80% of their manpower and up to 50% of their annual budgets to provide SWM services to city residents.

In a city like Bangalore, an urban resident generates about 0.6 kg of waste per day, totalling 0.2 tonnes per person per year. Overall, Bangalore generates about 5,000 tonnes of solid waste per day. Managing this volume of waste requires around 5,000 door-to-door waste collection vehicles, 600 compactors, and about 20,000 Paurakarmikas.

SWM services comprise four components: collection, transportation, processing and disposal. ULBs package collection and transportation together, and processing and disposal together. Collection and transportation are resource and labour-intensive and come up to 85-90% of the SWM budget, whereas only about 10-15% is spent on processing and disposal of waste.

What are the challenges?
Solid waste generated in Indian cities consists of about 55-60% wet biodegradable material and 40-45% non-biodegradable material. The portion of recyclable material in the dry waste is minimal, only about 1-2%, with the rest being mostly non-recyclable and non-biodegradable waste. Although 55% of the wet waste can be converted into organic compost or biogas, the yield is as low as 10-12%, making both composting and biogas generation from solid waste financially unviable. Typically, operational revenue from waste processing facilities covers only about 35-40% of operational expenses, with the rest subsidised by the ULB.

Apart from financial challenges, ULBs face other challenges associated with SWM services, such as extra work of clearing open points and drains, preventing open littering, seasonal changes in waste generation, and sweeping operations. Additionally, the disposal of non-compostable and non-recyclable dry waste, such as single-use plastic, textile waste and inert materials, is expensive since the material needs to be shipped to cement factories or waste-to-energy projects located about 400-500 km from cities.

Large cities like Bangalore spend about 15% of their budget–about ₹1,643 crore out of ₹11,163 crore – whereas the revenue from SWM services is almost negligible at ₹20 lakh per year. Smaller cities tend to spend up to 50% of their budget but also end up with almost negligible revenue. Hence, ULBs charge SWM cess to cover a portion of the costs.

What is the solution?
Although collection and transportation of waste generate no revenue, several strategies can reduce overall expenditure on SWM and lower user charges. These are segregation of waste at source, reducing single-use plastic, decentralised composting initiatives, Information, Education and Awareness (IEC) to prevent open littering, and asking bulk waste generators to process their own waste.

A balanced approach, combining marginal user charges with efficient operations, could help make our cities cleaner.

Pushkara S.V. works with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru.

THE GIST

- The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahangara Palike's decision to levy a Solid Waste Management cess of ₹100 per household has sparked debate and criticism among residents and stakeholders.
- Offering SWM services is complex and resource intensive. The yield from waste conversion is low and typically, operational revenue from waste processing facilities covers only about 35-40% of operational expenses, with the rest subsidised by the Urban Local Bodies.
- Large cities like Bangalore spend about 15% of their budget whereas the revenue from SWM services, is almost negligible at ₹20 lakh per year. Smaller cities tend to spend up to 50% of their budget but also end up with almost negligible revenue. Hence, ULBs charge SWM cess to cover a portion of the costs

CM defends fuel price hike, urges Centre to reduce excise duty

He says increase is not related to results of LS polls, and claims fuel is still cheaper in Karnataka than in neighbouring States

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A day after the State government hiked petrol and diesel prices by about ₹3 each, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday defended the hike and blamed the Centre for forcing the State to cut sales tax during the earlier years, while it continued to increase the Central excise duty on petroleum products.

In a note, he said that while under the "double engine BJP government" Karnataka was forced to reduce the tax, the Union government continued to collect higher Central excise duty from the State, and diverted the resources to other States. This had affected Karnataka's tax collection ability and had betrayed Kannadigas, he alleged.

The Chief Minister explained that the then BJP government imposed sales tax of 35% on petrol and 24% on diesel in April 2021. "After the Centre reduced taxes, the State also reduced tax on petrol to 25.92% and on diesel to 14.34%. However, neighbouring Kerala, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu did not reduce the tax."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah addressing presspersons at the helipad in Vijayapura on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

On Saturday, the State government increased the sales tax on petrol and diesel by 3.92% and 4.1%, respectively, which resulted in an increase in petrol and diesel prices by about ₹3 each.

The current prices of petrol and diesel in Bengaluru are ₹102.86 and ₹88.94, respectively. In 2023-2024, Karnataka consumed about 53.43 lakh kilolitres of petrol and 1.11 crore kilolitres of diesel. Annually, the State collects about ₹20,000 crore as tax on petrol and diesel, and the hike will provide at least ₹500 crore more annually.

Mr. Siddaramaiah pointed out that since 2014, the Centre increased the duty from ₹9.48 to ₹32.98 per litre of petrol, and from ₹3.56 to ₹31.83 per litre of diesel. "Subsequently, the excise duty on petrol and diesel was cut by ₹13 and ₹16 per litre, respectively, between November 2021 and May 2022. Despite the reductions, the current Central excise duty on petrol is ₹19.9 and on diesel is ₹15.8 per litre. We urge the Centre to reduce it for the benefit of the people."

> Additional money from the hike will be utilised to improve basic infrastructure and on development projects.
>
> **SIDDARAMAIAH,**
> Chief Minister

Stating that the hike had no relation to the Lok Sabha elections results, he said that despite the increase, petrol and diesel continue to be cheaper in Karnataka than neighbouring States.

"There is no link between the hike and the election results. Winning and losing is part of a democracy. We have not won the expected number of seats in Karnataka but have improved our vote share," the Chief Minister told presspersons in Vijayapura.

He was responding to an allegation by Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok that the government increased the fuel price in revenge for the Lok Sabha electoral losses.

After the hike came into effect on Saturday, Mr. Siddaramaiah said that petrol price in Karnataka is equivalent to the prevailing price in Tamil Nadu, while cheaper than that of Kerala, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. He added that petrol is cheaper in Karnataka than in the BJP-ruled Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, where the price is ₹104.86 and ₹106.47 per litre, respectively.

"Our tax on fuel remains lower than most south Indian States and similar economy-sized States like Maharashtra."

Responding to Union Heavy Industries and Steel Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, who said the cost of petrol has become the highest in the history of Karnataka, the Chief Minister said sales tax on petrol was 35% during the tenure of Mr. Kumaraswamy as Chief Minister.

Mr. Siddaramaiah said that government was committed to ensuring that citizens are not burdened with the hike. "The additional money from the hike will be utilised to improve basic infrastructure and on development projects," he added.

BJP leaders plan to lay siege to CM's residence today seeking withdrawal of hike

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bharatiya Janata Party, which has announced a Statewide protest on Monday against the increase in fuel prices, on Sunday said the latest hike is part of a series effected by the Congress government in the last one year.

The protest to seek rollback on the prices will be held at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, in which State BJP leaders and present and former MLAs and MPs will take part. The protesters will later lay siege to the official residence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The government hiked the prices of milk, alcohol, and power, and also increased stamp duty and guidance value in the last one year, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok told presspersons here.

BJP leaders C.N. Ashwath Narayan and R. Ashok addressing separate press conferences in Bengaluru on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'May mortgage properties'

"The prices are being increased to fund the ₹55,000-crore guarantee schemes. The government does not have money to pay salaries. It may mortgage government properties, including the Vidhana Soudha, to raise money. The hike in fuel prices will result in the increase in prices of vegetables, fruits, and other essential items."

He also accused the government of increasing the prices as people did not vote for the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections.

Urging the government to roll back the hike, former Deputy Chief Minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan said that it is unfortunate that the Congress which came to power on the narrative of price rise, has itself increased prices.

"The Congress government is ensuring the guarantee of price rise. During the elections, it had promised to provide relief from price rise to people. When the BJP government wanted to increase prices, Mr. Siddaramaiah in the past argued against it, saying that rise in fuel prices would lead to inflation."

'People should protest'

Speaking to reporters in Nagamangala, Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy also claimed the hike was to fund the guarantees. "The Congress has devised a strategy to increase taxes from people and give money back through the guarantee schemes. More than the BJP or the Janata Dal (Secular), the people should protest," he added.

Fund allocation: M.B. Patil warns of legal fight against Centre

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Large and Medium Industries Minister M.B. Patil on Sunday launched a counter-attack against the BJP, which is protesting the hike in sales tax on petrol and diesel, alleging the Centre is meting out injustice in the allocation of funds to progressive States like Karnataka, despite collecting a significant annual cess of ₹2.5 lakh crore, and warned of a legal fight to secure the State's rightful share.

In a post on X, Mr. Patil stated that although States like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana contribute a larger share to the cess collection, they are not receiving a fair portion from the Centre. Instead, a larger share is being allocated to States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Describing this as "unquestionably unfair", he tagged Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy in his post.

M.B. Patil

Minister claims Centre is meting out injustice to progressive States like Karnataka

Mr. Patil warned that if this policy continued, States like Karnataka might have to file a public interest litigation in the Supreme Court to secure their share.

DKS' meeting at KPCC office draws BJP ire

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The BJP has taken serious exception to Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who is also the KPCC president, recently holding a meeting of the presidents of various academies at the KPCC office, as against the tradition of holding it in either the State Secretariat or government offices.

In a social media post on Sunday, BJP leader and former Kannada and Culture Minister V. Sunil Kumar described the meeting, in which Mr. Shivakumar reportedly advised them on their behaviour, as an insult to the field of literature and culture.

He alleged that the government, which had turned officials into its servants, was now trying to dictate terms to writers and scholars too.

He said it was a matter of disgust that those who wanted the creative field to be insulated from politics, were themselves part of such a meeting.

The controversial Youth Congress leader, Mohammed Haris Nalapad, too attended the meeting, in which Mr. Shivakumar reportedly told them that such posts would be a stepping stone to politics, he alleged.

Tourism conclave in Bengaluru draws ₹4,200 cr. in investments

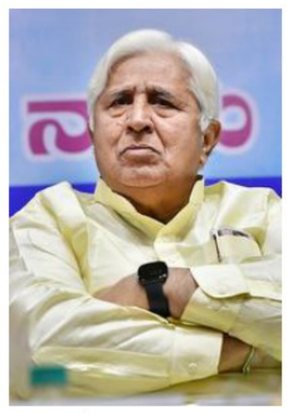
The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The two-day Dakshin Bharat Utsav, the southern regional tourism conclave, which concluded in Bengaluru on Sunday, saw MoUs worth ₹4,200 crore being signed.

Appeal to investors

Announcing this during the valedictory function, Tourism Minister H.K. Patil urged private investors to join hands with the State government in developing infrastructure at tourist spots.

The Minister observed that the Shakti scheme, providing free travel to women in buses, had increased visitors to tourist areas by nearly 50%. The focus is now on upgrading infrastructure at these places, he noted.



H.K. Patil

Minister says focus is on upgrading infrastructure at tourist places across Karnataka

Upgrading the infrastructure would further increase tourism potential, the Minister pointed out.

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot too addressed the event, which had been jointly organised by the Karnataka Tourism Department and the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

No official residence yet for Ashok

The ruling Congress seems to be delaying allotting an official residence to Leader of the Opposition

in the Legislative Assembly R. Ashok *(pictured)*, who has been putting the State government on the mat on the fuel price hike, law and order issues, and a scam in the Valmiki Development Corporation in the recent past. Mr. Ashok has been LoP for the past several months, but the government is yet to heed his request for official quarters. Secretariat sources revealed that the LoP's office has written multiple letters to the government, but there was no response. Mr. Ashok expressed disappointment over the government's laxity and said Ministers had been allotted official residences on priority but the same had been denied to him. It remains to be seen how much longer the government will take to follow the protocol.

Tough times for Shivakumar

After the Lok Sabha results, Cooperation Minister K.N. Rajanna *(pictured)* has yet again renewed his demand for creation of more Deputy Chief Minister posts, claiming that it will help the party secure more

seats in the coming rural and urban local bodies' polls. A couple of MLAs, who had been denied ministerial berths, reportedly held Ministers responsible for the less-than-expected showing of the ruling party in the Lok Sabha elections and sought their resignations. Some MLAs even demanded discontinuation of the five guarantees and sought allocation of more funds for development works. In the midst of all this, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has issued a diktat to Congress legislators to stop discussing the party's performance in the LS elections in public. The poll outcome is seen as a major setback to Mr. Shivakumar, which saw his brother D.K. Suresh defeated. He could also ensure the victory of only one Vokkaliga candidate (the community to which Mr. Shivakumar belongs) in the southern region.

Teething troubles in new role for HDK

It appears like Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy *(pictured)* is yet to get used to the

ways of his new role, under the direct gaze of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, given how he had to retract his statements, a day after raising questions on the subsidy given to the Gujarat unit of U.S.-based micro chip manufacturer Micron Technology.

On Friday, addressing JD(S) workers in Karnataka, Mr. Kumaraswamy had raised questions on the company that is generating about 5,000 jobs receiving $2 billion through subsidies. The company would recover 70% of the $2.75 billion investment through subsidies from the State and the Centre, he had said.

Doing a u-turn the next day, Mr. Kumaraswamy not only waxed eloquent on the strategic importance of the semi conductor industry, but also said that he "greatly appreciate the semiconductor related initiatives taken by the Prime Minister's Office", a language typical of Union Ministers. "In future, I have to be cautious," he said, not quite stating openly whether he got a rap for speaking out of turn, that too about a unit in the PM's State.

Nagesh Prabhu
Sharath S. Srivatsa

State government set to expand scope of Krishi Bhagya scheme

B.S. Satish Kumar
BENGALURU

After a year of severe drought, the State government has decided to ensure the sustainability of farm activities by focusing on its flagship programme, the Krishi Bhagya, which aims to store rainwater in farm ponds for crops during the summer.

The government has decided to not only provide more funds than what has been allocated in the Budget, but is also set to expand the scheme's scope, by removing restrictions on taking it to the tail-end portions of the irrigation command areas.

Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvarayaswamy told *The Hindu* that there was a dire need to expand the scope of the scheme and implement it even in the tail-end portions of the command areas, as these were hardly getting adequate quantum of irrigation water from canals.

Emphasising on the importance of the Krishi Bhagya scheme in turning dryland farming into a sustainable activity through the natural method of stored rainwater, the Minister said his department was gearing up to ensure that 30,000 to 40,000 farm ponds were built this year.

The Agriculture Department is gearing up to ensure that 30,000 to 40,000 farm ponds are built this year. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

The State Budget earmarked ₹200 crore for the project that includes a contribution of ₹100 crore from the Revenue Department.

However, the total financial requirement is bound to surpass the budgetary allocation, considering the number of farm ponds being planned this year, he said.

The scheme was generally being implemented in four dry climatic zones, comprising 106 taluks spread over 24 districts. However, it will be expanded to all 236 taluks of 31 districts this time.

The Krishi Bhagya scheme was started by then Agriculture Minister Krishna Byre Gowda in 2014-15, to ensure sustainable farming in a State like Karnataka, which stands next only to Rajasthan in terms of the extent of drought-prone land. But the erstwhile BJP dispensation discontinued the scheme since 2021-22. It was re-introduced by the Congress government in 2023-24.

A total of 2,89,827 farm ponds were built under the first phase of the scheme which was implemented from 2014-15 to 2020-21. These ponds have the total capacity to store 1,472.31 lakh cubic metres of water.

What is the scheme?

The scheme comprises the components of building farm ponds, providing polythene lining to ensure that the water does not percolate, erecting a fence around the pond, installing a pump for lifting the water, and adopting drip/sprinkler irrigation methods to effectively supply water. Under the scheme the government provides subsidy for all the components.

About 64% of Karnataka's cultivable area is rainfed. Despite the dependence on rain, the State's rain-fed areas contribute to 55% of food production and 75% of oil seed production.

CACHE

Is Pakistan using a firewall to censor social media platforms?

Pakistani media outlets reported that the country is deploying a Chinese-style firewall to block access to social media platforms; even those using Virtual Private Networks (VPN) to access the Internet are likely to be hit by this firewall; however, Pakistan Information Minister denies reports

According to estimates from the digital privacy research group Top10VPN, Pakistan has shut down the Internet for 1,752 hours so far in 2024. AFP

Sahana Venugopal

Pakistani media outlets reported in the past week that the country plans to implement a Chinese-style firewall to block users from accessing social media platforms.

Newspapers *Pakistan Observer* and *Daily Ausaf* claim the government is ready to set up a 'National Firewall' to stop people from accessing X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and YouTube. These outlets also noted that there are plans for filtering keywords to enforce the policy and block unwanted content. Other media reports claim even those using virtual private networks (VPNs) to access the Internet would be hit by this digital firewall.

However, media outlet Samaa on June 10 quoted Pakistan's Information Minister Atta Tarar as saying that no 'Chinese-style firewall' was being set up, though he did speak about the need to crack down on hate speech and misinformation.

Such conflicting reports reveal the lack of clarity regarding the current status of Pakistan's potential firewall and its implementation. But, it must be noted that Pakistan does have a history of curtailing people's access to the Internet, either through website or social media blocks. Some examples include a Twitter block in 2017 that was flagged by the company itself, and Internet disruptions earlier this year around the time of the country's elections.

How does a digital firewall work?

Simply put, firewalls are security tools that stop online traffic from reaching certain sites. They can prevent malicious actors from targeting individual users' computer systems or home networks, and even thwart cyber threats on specific websites.

Though in recent times they are associated with censorship by oppressive governments, firewalls were meant to be a security tool. In fact, if you look at the settings of your personal computer, you will likely see options to set up firewalls of your own with varying restriction levels. A firewall can be a physical device, or a software-based tool. It depends on a specific user's needs.

At the other end of the spectrum, large firewalls like the Great Firewall of China, for example, are highly complex cybersecurity tools maintained at scale to prevent people from accessing large sections of the Internet. That means nation states can entirely stop citizens from accessing the most commonly used websites on the Internet – say social media sites or information gathering platforms.

While VPNs or privacy browsers can help disguise a user's location, the amount of friction in the process of trying to bypass a firewall puts off most people and repels those who lack technical skills and knowledge.

How are people's lives affected?

When used by nation-states, a firewall impedes activists, journalists, dissidents, and regime critics from obtaining information critical of the government. Internet shutdowns and social media blocks also prevent governments or military authorities from being held accountable during periods of civil unrest and violence.

Whenever an Internet shutdown or block is suddenly implemented, the country's citizens suffer a huge setback, education is disrupted, and healthcare institutions struggle to provide quality care.

According to estimates from the digital privacy research group Top10VPN, Pakistan has shut down the Internet for 1,752 hours so far in 2024.

"Pakistan's restrictions have been by far the costliest election-related shutdown, costing $351 million," noted the group in its report, adding that the economic cost of Internet shutdowns worldwide last year was $9.13 billion.

A firewall might look like a viable alternative to authoritarian nation states who wish to replace a larger, free Internet with a controlled intra-net. However, setting up and maintaining a firewall is no easy task. Even for a small company, firewall implementation and maintenance are expensive. The firewalls require constant monitoring to thwart bad actors and patch security vulnerabilities as soon as they are detected. At a national level, this expenditure is much higher as a far greater number of people are looking to bypass the restrictions.

Firewalls also bring up antitrust concerns because they hurt competition. Well-performing companies and businesses that would normally gain more users may be blocked and replaced by government-approved alternatives with lower privacy and service standards, degrading the Internet user's experience even further.

Adding to this, apps and services may be combined for the authorities' convenience instead of encouraging users to try out new and independent alternatives. The Great Firewall of China is a major example of this phenomenon.

Both India and Pakistan have a record of censoring the Internet or shutting it down. India blocked access to the Internet 116 times in 2023, per a report released by the Keep It On coalition.

Has Pakistan blocked the Internet or social media before?

Pakistan has frequently obstructed people from accessing the Internet or specific social media platforms over the course of more than a decade. Talks of a Chinese-style national firewall in Pakistan have been making rounds since around 2012, though not much verified data is available regarding the status of this project.

In 2012, the country's government blocked around 20,000 websites, including YouTube, as per a Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) official. In 2017, Jack Dorsey-led Twitter posted on its Global Government Affairs account that it was aware of reports that the "Pakistani government has taken action to block Twitter service, as well as other social media services."

In the first two months of 2024 as Pakistan prepared for its elections, the government throttled access to Elon Musk-owned X for days on end. Internet service was also largely affected during this time period. Activists protested the move, but government authorities attributed it to system upgrades.

"Pakistani authorities have already imposed multiple shutdowns that disrupted opposition activities during this election cycle. At least 11 Internet shutdowns were imposed during the last election year of 2018, and the authoritarian use of shutdowns has only emboldened through 2022, 2023, and now 2024," said digital rights advocacy group Access Now, in a statement in February.

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

'Is prepone the opposite of postpone?'

"I've seen that unhappy look before. Did you have another silly argument with Sujatha?"

"Is it that obvious? I tell you, that woman just drives me crazy."

"What did the two of you argue about this time? Was it about the recent elections or was it..."

"It had nothing to do with politics. It was about the word 'prepone'. I argued that the opposite of 'postpone' is 'prepone'. She said that native speakers of English do not use 'prepone'. Tell me, is she right or am I right?"

"Well, for a change, both of you are right! You see, we Indians coined the word 'prepone'. We use it quite a bit in our country. It's quite common to hear a sentence like, the meeting was preponed by a couple of hours."

"We need to prepone the launch date of our new product. It needs to be launched at least a week before our rival's."

"That's a good example! But the word is mostly used by us. Native speakers..."

"Why don't native speakers use it? After all, 'prepone' has been listed in most standard dictionaries."

"That's true. But the dictionaries make it very clear that it's an example of Indian English!"

"You are right! Many dictionaries have 'Indian' or 'Indian English' within brackets next to the word. So, what word do native speakers of English use instead of 'prepone'?"

"They use quite a few actually. One is 'advance'. The meeting was advanced to Monday."

"Would it be possible to advance my appointment to Friday?"

"That's a good example. Native speakers also use the expression 'move forward'. Tomorrow's meeting has been moved forward. We'll be meeting at 10:00 a.m. instead of 3:00 p.m."

"I think Sneha is planning to move her wedding date forward."

"Good for her. Who is this Sneha that you're talking about? Do I know her?"

"She was my classmate. I don't know if you ever met her. She was tall..."

"I don't think I've met her. But for some reason, her name rings a bell."

"Rings a bell? What does the expression mean?"

"When somebody says something, and you respond by saying that it rings a bell, what you are suggesting is that it sounds familiar. What the person has said..."

"What the person has said reminds you of something. It jogs your memory."

S. Upendran
upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Repartee:
quick and usually funny answers and remarks in conversation

Synonyms: humour, wittiness

Usage: *Oscar Wilde's plays are full of witty repartee.*

Pronunciation: https://bit.ly/reparteepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˌrep.ɑːˈtiː/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

A quiz on the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Iceland

V. V. Ramanan

QUESTION #1
June 17 marks the end of Iceland's centuries old ties with which country?

QUESTION #2
What is the Capital of Iceland and what distinction does it hold as regards its location?

QUESTION #3
Name the Icelandic parliament which is one of oldest surviving parliaments in the world, having been founded in 930 at Pingvellir ('assembly fields') and situated approximately 45 km close to its modern capital.

QUESTION #4
Name the Icelandic saga that is considered one of the greatest prose works of medieval literature?

QUESTION #5
The 'Hakarl', an Icelandic national dish, is made using the rotten meat of which marine animal that has been cured with a fermentation process and hung to dry in an open air shed.

QUESTION #6
Which late American sporting legend, who won the World championship in his sport at Reykjavik in 1972 but became a recluse, was granted an Icelandic citizenship in 2005?

Visual question: If the colours white and blue in the Icelandic flag represent the snow and ocean, what does red represent?

Answers to the previous day's quiz:

1. White colour said to be achromatic because it has no ___ **Ans:-Hue**
2. When red, green, and blue are mixed on electronic screens, you get white. This process is called ___ **Ans:- Additive mixing**
3. Name the carbonate mineral (or rock) with the use of which paintings from the Palaeolithic ear were able to obtain white colour **Ans:- Calcite or chalk**.
4. Ancient Rome had two words to describe the colour white: _____ and candidus. **Ans:- Albus**
5. Jainism has two branches. The names of the two branches are _____ and Digamber, which in Sanskrit mean "white clad" and "sky clad", respectively. **Ans:- Shwetamber**
6. Visual question: This man created Russia's flag by reordering the colours of the Dutch flag, which was the first national flag to feature white **Ans:- Peter the Great**

Early Birds
Rajmohan V – C Saravanan – Jyot Prakash Gulati – Bharath Viswanathan – Abhinav Raj Satwat

Breaking the 'class' ceiling: Student-focused funds help campus start-ups take wings

While typically there has been a high entry barrier for student start-ups to raise funding, emergence of funds with dedicated focus on campus entrepreneurs seem to be easing the situation

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

It was a conversation with Prof. Jawahar Doreswamy, CEO of PES Institutions, that prompted Suresh Narasimha to start CoCreate Ventures, a venture capital fund that focuses on student start-ups.

"Jawahar asked me why there are no funds that invest in ideas of students. That made me think. I started researching on it and structured a fund that would invest in students building start-ups, at the idea stage," says Narasimha.

Being a student entrepreneur and raising money can be tough. In India, funds that focus on student start-ups have been far and few. Whereas, within the larger venture capital ecosystem, there exists a certain scepticism about student ventures, very often for justifiable reasons.

But, it's not all doom and gloom for those who, in their dorm rooms, are dreaming of entrepreneurship. Lately more funds seem to be emerging with a dedicated focus on student start-ups.

High entry barrier

While student start-ups have managed to raise funding, ecosystem players point out that it has been more of an exemption than a norm.

So, what created the high entry barrier for student start-ups in terms of fund raising?

Naramasimha points out that among VCs there is scepticism about student start-ups even today, and for the right reasons.

"If I have to invest money and I don't even know what their commitment is or how much is their ability to understand the market, I would hesitate. These kinds of questions arise when you are a student. So, naturally, the entry barrier for a student to raise money is a lot higher."

That said, the student focus funds choose to see the other side of this and find potential in the kind of fresh ideas one develops as a student.

Dorm room start-ups

"A lot of the large transformational start-ups that have been built in the world were actually started by their founders in their dorm rooms - be it your Mark Zuckerberg or Bill Gates," says Richa Bajpai, founder and CEO at Campus Fund, a fund which invests exclusively in student startups.

Bajpai herself started her first company in her dorm room in 2009 when she was a student.

"We believe that the next set of these transformational global companies will be built from India, now. So, we want to find these young innovators in their dorm rooms and back them early on. Also, as a fund manager, it's the place where you can get exceptional returns," she adds.

Risk alleviation

Student-focused funds also adopt mechanisms and procedures that help alleviate the risk associated with these young start-ups to the maximum possible extent.

Campus Fund, for example, operate very differently compared to a conventional VC, says Bajpai.

"We are in fact creating a new category of founders called student entrepreneurs. So, the way to approach them, to interact with them and to evaluate them is completely different."

The fund has a team of around 100 students across different colleges and universities, who work with them to find and evaluate student entrepreneurs.

Bajpai notes that Campus Fund is a pre-seed investor and most of their portfolio companies are pre-revenue.

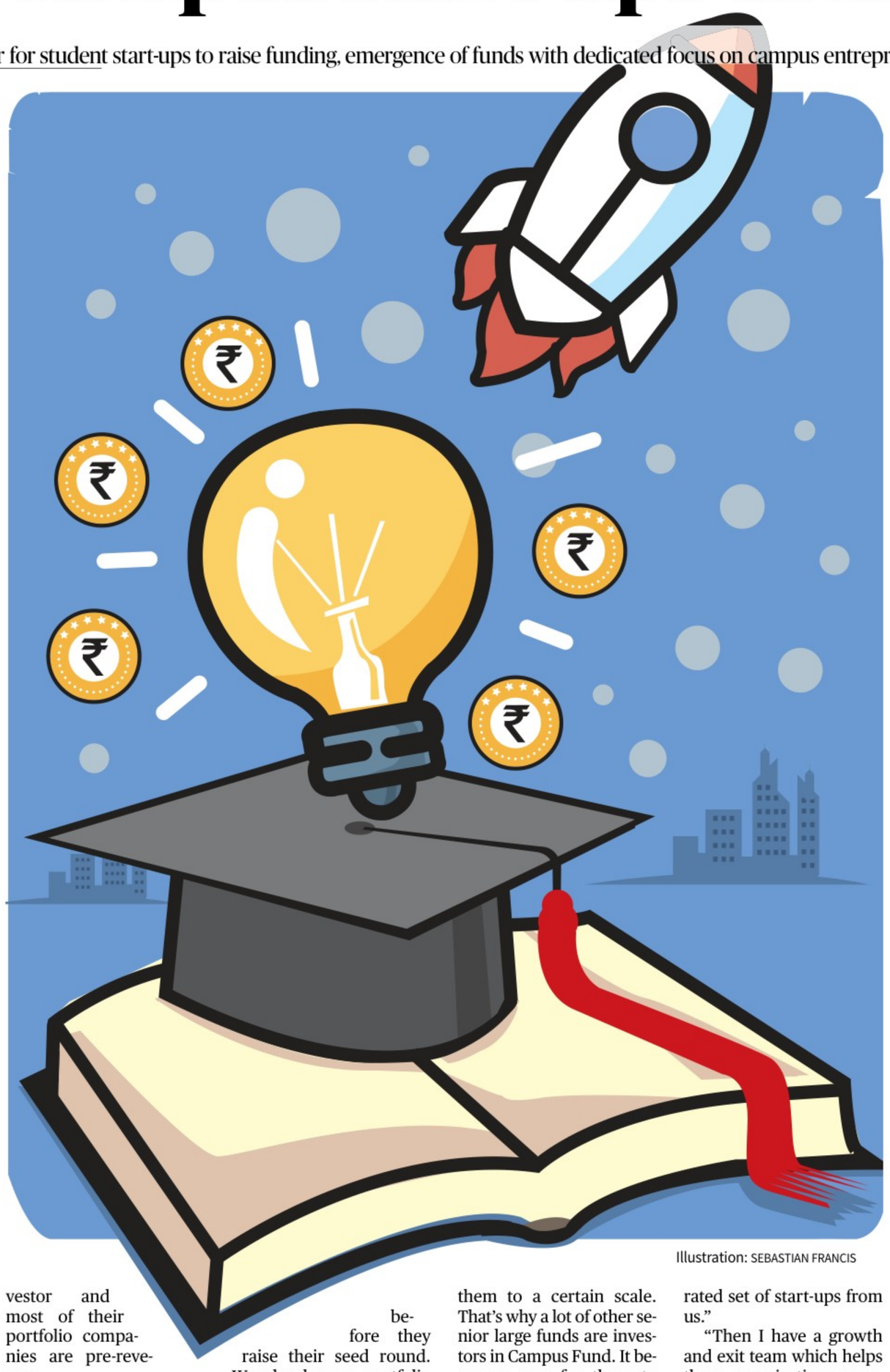


Illustration: SEBASTIAN FRANCIS

"So we handhold them for 15 to 24 months before they raise their seed round. We also have a portfolio management team that works with them to get them to a certain scale. That's why a lot of other senior large funds are investors in Campus Fund. It becomes easy for them to invest in our portfolio companies since they get a curated set of start-ups from us."

"Then I have a growth and exit team which helps these organizations grow, and raise their next round of funding. So it's a very different model unlike a typical VC. We are going to the grassroots and then finding these folks."

According to Bajpai, the fact that the fund has evaluated around 9500 student-led startups in the last 3.5 years and has invested only in 27 is a mark of the efficiency of its curation process.

Across India

CoCreate Ventures, on the other hand, runs a foundation which works with universites and colleges to motivate bright students to become innovators.

"We have a venture foundry which handholds the students from the idea stage to the product stage. We will give them all the resources and take care of expenses such as their salary, the team they want to hire, data they want to procure, marketing and so on. Once the product is ready and the initial customer is there, we will put in $200,000 in the company which can be used for market access," explains Narasimha.

"We make it very easy for them to get in, harder for them to stay back. They come in through the foundation, go through multiple iterations with the venture studio for 12 months, and then only we will invest."

According to him, the fund has helped initiate around 75 teams in the last 2.5 years, 30 of which have started generating revenues and seven have done follow on rounds. The later rounds being 2-4x times the money put in by CoCreate also makes it commercially a very attractive proposition for the fund.

"Globally there is lot of hype around this space," Narasimha points out.

The team currently works with around 40 universities and 400 colleges in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, North East India and Tamil Nadu. All the founders are less than 22 years old and around 60 per cent of them women, says Narasimha.

Entering at the right stage

Chandran Krishnan, Managing Director & CEO - Campus Angels Network, cofounded the fund to fund start-ups that are have validated their projects and are ready to go to market. This, he says, helps a great deal in eliminating risk.

According to him, while student startups do come with the risk of lack of experience, it is also not that hard to spot those with enough passion, unique ideas and good bonds between the cofounders.

"University campuses have become the hub for innovation and incubation," he points out. The network works with incubators of IIT-M, Anna University, PSG, VIT and more.

Student experiences

Ananya Mungara, founder and CEO at SmartChakra which has developed a tyre management system, feels it's important to have more student-focused funds as it's easier for student innovators to approach them than the larger funds initially. SmartChakra was one of the first start-ups to be incubated by CoCreate.

"People here understand you're a student, and you might have exams and assignments. If you go to a conventional VC they see don't see you as a student, but as a company. Student-focused funds understand you better because they understand you as a student entrepreneur who is running a company. Funds like these allow students to give entrepreneurship a shot and lean whether it works or not for them before placements start in the final year," Mungara notes.

Record employee volunteer participation in Global Month of Volunteering

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amazon.in saw record participation of their employees in Global Month of Volunteering celebrated in May 2024. Over 1.1 lakh employees came together, that included their corporate employees and associates in India. Through the volunteering efforts, Amazon touched upon key focus areas such as women empowerment, sustainability, food security and education. It created over 400 volunteering opportunities across India, partnering with more than 55 non-profit organisations where employees can participate in a variety of in-office. outside-office, and virtual volunteering activities.

Manish Tiwary, Vice President and Country Manager, at Amazon India, said, "At Amazon, the well-being of the communities we serve is core to our success. Our Global Month of Volunteering unites our employees and empowers them to make a real difference. Through GMV, we have already impacted the lives of over 1.36 lakh beneficiaries across India."

According to the release, Amazon.in volunteers came together to support a range of activities to support and empower communities by fostering local self-help groups to promote indigenous products enabling a sustainable livelihood; supporting girl students in STEM education through various nonprofit collaborations; helping reduce waste in communities by transforming waste fabric into usable bags and planting self-sustaining saplings while encouraging them towards building a more sustainable and environmentally conscious community; distributing ration kits including ready-to-eat meals and essential groceries like dal and rice among underserved communities and many such programmes.

So far, Amazon touched the lives of over 20,000 women and girls. Additionally, it is enabling entrepreneurship in this space by setting up sanitary napkin production units in several cities including cities like Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore. These manufacturing units not only provide sustainable livelihood solutions for 60 rural womenbut also ensures the availability of environmentally responsible products, says a release.

Focus on innovation, learning, and health critical for India to become superpower, says Dinesh Gundu Rao

KDEM has been working on the Beyond Bengaluru outreach programme, with an aim to create opportunities for talent to thrive outside of Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

It's critical for India to keep on innovating, learning, and focusing on health for it to become a global superpower, said Dinesh Gundu Rao, Minister for Health and Family Welfare.

The Minister was speaking at an HR event organised by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) here earlier this week.

Commenting on the importance of skill, he said, "India is the biggest power when it comes to knowledge and skillsets. With proper training and skilling, we can become an unbeatable nation. Skillsets are the biggest resource of this country of over 140 crore people."

According to Mr. Rao, the country has achieved a lot and its corporate sector has grown tremendously in the last 40 years. "India is the biggest power when it comes to knowledge and skills. With proper training and skillset, India will become an unbeatable nation in the coming days. But it is a process that we have to keep working on and keep innovating and learning," he urged.

A file photo of Dinesh Gundu Rao .

Nurturing talent

Speaking on the occasion, B.V. Naidu, chairman, Karnataka Digital Economy Mission (KDEM), stressed on the importance of nurturing talent at the same time, without losing focus on retention and reduction of talent attrition.

KDEM has been working on the Beyond Bengaluru outreach programme, with an aim to create opportunities for talent to thrive outside of Bangalore. He said: "We are expanding to Mysuru and Hubballi and in addition, we are working towards establishing state-of-the-art co-working spaces in Mysuru. These spaces will engage talent within their own geographies, providing them with better opportunities. ," Mr. Naidu said.

T.R. Parsuraman, chairman, ASSOCHAM Southern Region Council and executive adviser, Toyota Kirloskar, said, "HR is an important function in nurturing MSMEs towards India's $10 trillion economy. We are thankful to the State government for favourable policies to nurture corporates in Karnataka." Assocham gave away HR Trailblazer Awards honouring select corporates for driving innovation,inclusion, and excellence in their workplaces.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 17, 1974

Game Sanctuary Complex

Bangalore, June 16. Karnataka Government sources here are hopeful of an early Central decision on the proposed game sanctuary complex running in one stretch from the Moyar river of Tamil Nadu to the Laxmanathirtha river in Coorg district of Karnataka

A project report for integrated development of the game sanctuary complex consisting of the entire area between Bandipur and Nagerhole in Karnataka, Mudumalai in Tamil Nadu and adjacent Wynaad area of Kerala is awaiting central Government's clearance.

According to the Karnataka Government sources, the Tamil Nadu and Kerala Governments are also keen on the complex which would perhaps be the largest in India.

Scheme to Help Doctors Settle in Villages

Gulbarga, June 16. The Karnataka Government is considering a plan to help doctors settle in rural areas.

Under the scheme, the Government will give a substantial amount in the form of subsidy to graduates setting up practice in rural areas. Nationalised banks will meet the rest of the financial outlay.

The proposal is stated to have been informally discussed and details of the scheme are being worked out to enable cabinet level discussions. The encouraging response received by the Government to the half million job programme, under which many doctors were posted to villages, is said to have prompted the ministry to formulate this scheme.

CITYBEATS

Life on the Ganges

ONGOING
The ongoing art exhibition, *Ganga*, features works by Yusuf Arakkal and his son Shibu Arakkal.
The works are intertwined with philosophical explorations and personal truths, with both claiming to be drawn to the river and the lives of those who have spent their time navigating its waters.
On at Sandeep & Gitanjali Maini Foundation, Lavelle Road, till July 10.

Brunch on...

ONGOING
The Fatty Bao, known for serving Asian cuisine, has introduced a new Sunday Brunch, which will be on from noon to 3.30pm.
The brunch focuses on interactive dining and unique presentations, with a menu featuring dishes like charred corn and shiitake broth, prawn tempura and avocado and cream cheese, panko katsu fish bao and more.
Fatty Bao, Lavelle Road, can be called on 9901764711.

Tune in

ONGOING
Listen to Sizy, a multi-genre Western music vocalist with a messo-soprano range.
She will be covering songs across classic rock, pop, jazz, funk, alt and Bollywood.
She has more than 80 solo, duo and band shows to her credit and is a self-trained singer, known for powerful vocals, tonal quality and impressive sustenance.
At Jamie Oliver Kitchen, Indiranagar, at 8pm. Entry is free. Call 9311279090 for details.

Unique brews with tender coconut

Cocktails and coffee get a coconuty-twist courtesy bartenders and coffee experts

Nidhi Adlakha

Refresher course Get your coconut water and then some. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Last year was all about fruits in cocktails, and if 2024 trends are anything to go by, experts predict hyper-seasonal cocktails, and minimalist drinks ruling menus. This season, it is all about the coconut and if you are looking at making your cocktails a bit hydrating, bartenders have you covered.

At Aqua, The Park Bengaluru, new launches this season include Al-Diablo (with Byadgi chilli infused gin, tempered tamarind pulp, tender coconut water) and the tender coconut water wash. "These drinks have been popular this summer," says Kiron Kumar, Director - Operations at The Park, Bengaluru, adding, "We are also working on recipes with tender coconut water for the native/foraged section and even in the zero-alcohol drinks section."

At New Delhi's Sidecar – that won India's best bar title by 30 Best Bars India earlier this year – tender coconut features in the Coco Curry Hi Ball (curry leaves infused gin with tender coconut water, lime acid) and a version of their clarified pina colada. "A twist on the all-time classic with fresh tender coconut water is completely next level," says mixologist Yangdup Lama who owns Sidecar.

Launched two years ago, the drinks do not feature on their regular menu but appear on "seasonal menus and on guest requests". "Earlier, people were skeptical about coconuts in their drink. But if you do it right, it works well and coconut water works well as is instead of the fruit. In the Coco Curry Hi Ball, it blends perfectly with the curry leaves and its acceptance is better," says Yangdup who plans on spotlighting the ingredient in upcoming cocktail menus. "It is one of the most sought-after ingredients for its hydrating properties, and also how it lends to the styling of cocktails. It is clear water that also helps bring in the flavour and character of drinks."

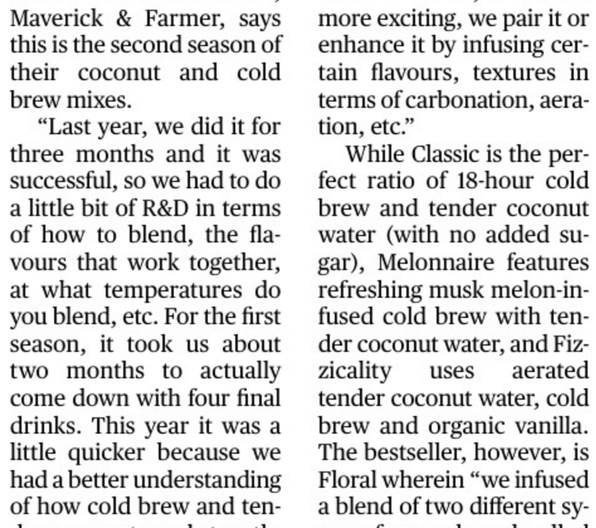
This season, it is all about the coconut and if you are looking at making your cocktails a bit hydrating, bartenders have you covered.

This March, Chennai's Pandan Club's first cocktail menu, Shortest Route, featured Serangoon Smith (with a gin base, coconut, and a blend of spices and citrus). "It is inspired by the vibrant streets of Singapore and the cultural richness of Chennai. We have also launched a zero ABV Coconut Toddy using fresh coconut water, capturing the essence of traditional toddy without the alcohol," adds Manoj.

And it is not just cocktails. Two years ago, Beachville Coffee Roasters, Chennai, launched Nutcase, a drink combining coconut water with a rich nitro cold brew.

Founder Divya Jayashankar says the drink is popular during summers, when "coconuts are at their sweetest". "During this window, we source coconuts from local vendors. Outside of this period, we use bottled coconut water," she says.

The summer menu at Bengaluru's Maverick & Farmer's this year features four new drinks – Classic, Melonnaire, Floral and Fizzicality – that blend tender coconut with cold brews. Ashish D'abreo, coffee roaster and co-founder, Maverick & Farmer, says this is the second season of their coconut and cold brew mixes.



Tender coconut is now featuring on cocktail and coffee menus GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

"Last year, we did it for three months and it was successful, so we had to do a little bit of R&D in terms of how to blend, the flavours that work together, at what temperatures do you blend, etc. For the first season, it took us about two months to actually come down with four final drinks. This year it was a little quicker because we had a better understanding of how cold brew and tender coconut work together," he says.

Elaborating on how the team balanced the contrasting flavours, he says, "Coffee and tender coconut water work together just as it is. There is no need for adding any sweetener. However, to make it more exciting, we pair it or enhance it by infusing certain flavours, textures in terms of carbonation, aeration, etc."

While Classic is the perfect ratio of 18-hour cold brew and tender coconut water (with no added sugar), Melonnaire features refreshing musk melon-infused cold brew with tender coconut water, and Fizzicality uses aerated tender coconut water, cold brew and organic vanilla. The bestseller, however, is Floral wherein "we infused a blend of two different syrups from a brand called Chunnilal in Bikaner. It is a legendary institution, which has been making sherbets for many years and is very well known across the country. We worked with them and created a different sort of a very floral fruity syrup, which has been used to create one of the drinks and it's really working well," says Avinash.

Math, music and more

Ruth Dhanaraj

The second edition of ZLB23 Magnetic Music 02, featuring Indian fusion bands is on and continues till June 21. As part of their line-up, Chennai-band Jatayu known for their unique blend of Carnatic and contemporary music, opened the event in Bengaluru on June 15.

The four-man band Jatayu comprises leader and guitarist Sahib Singh, Shylu Ravindran who plays the guitars, ganjira and mridangam, bassist Kashyap Jaishankar and vocalist Manu Krishna who is also their drummer. Post their show in Bengaluru, Sahib elaborated on the band's signature sound.

"As a predominantly instrumental band, we use rhythms from Carnatic literature and incorporate them into Western instruments; that is at the core of who we are. We also enjoy experimenting and improvising with the audience wherever we go, getting them involved in the performance," said Sahib.

He also shared their experience during their tour to Japan last year. The band had a 4000-strong audience singing with them. "We basically use *konnakol* (the spoken component of metre) and ask them to repeat it with us. The call-and-response we do with the crowd is how we jam with them. They either hum with us or recite some *konnakol*."

"That is something we take pride in – because we are instrumental we sort of break boundaries. Music is our language of communication; it is a common language worldwide – to understand and be understood."

Jatayu's website says their music "blends the rich tradition of Carnatic music with the dynamic energy of funk, rock, jazz, and a hint of Indian math rock."

Somehow the terms 'math' and 'rock's don't compute for me, but Sahib patiently explained, "It is basically *konnakol* but we describe it as math rock for audiences abroad. Jatayu is all about numbers and rhythm – our logo too, is a combination of the four main arithmetic symbols. "

For their performance in Bengaluru, they presented an acoustic set, which is a rarity for them, mainly because the venue was an intimate setting of sorts. "We introduced a mridangam piece and some new stuff we had been working on. So, it was quite interesting apart from a unique take on some of our original music," he said.

Musical chairs

ZLB23's Magentic Music Season 02 continues with:
- **18 June:** The Varun Nimbolkar Collective from Pune is known for their indie fusion of the sitar and electronic beats
- **19 June:** Mumbai-based Aaikyam is a multilingual band that performs in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi and English
- **20 June:** With the Hindustani tabla, bol, bansuri, Carnatic mridangam and khanjira along with a fusion guitar, Skin Wind & String is a unique blend of melody
- **21 June:** Rajasthan Roots will bring in their performance of popular folk, upbeat originals and a wide repertoire of timeless Sufi
- **21 June:** Ricky Kej's music focuses on planet consciousness and largely involves Hindustani classical music as well as Carnatic influences

All performances begin at 8pm. For reservations send a WhatsApp message to 9632060433

Beat it Members of the band Jatayu love connecting with the rhythm. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Vibrant hues Some of the works that were displayed at the exhibition. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Fresh frames of work

Abhilekh Baruah

Art Bengaluru Collective (ABC) is a vibrant art appreciation platform, launched in 2022 by Ranji David and Bengaluru-based journalist and artist Rasheed Kappan.

The fifth edition of ABC or ABC 5.0, which concluded on June 15, was held at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath. It showcased the works of over 30 artists, with over 250 works of art spread across three galleries.

ABC 5.0 had a diverse range of art, including traditional and abstract paintings, charcoal and pen-and-ink artworks, photographic works and graphic cartoons on display. Along with these, also on display were landscapes, realism, minimalism, portraits and sketches. One of the most notable and regular features of the Collective was its inclusion of first-timers as well as professional artists, offering a platform for creativity to one and all.

While Sathya Krishna Prakash, a freelance animator and artist, has been involved with art for over a decade, this was his first exhibition with ABC. "I create a lot of art related to natural history, animals and birds. For this show I exhibited a pen sketch and a charcoal one," shared Sathya, adding that he also works with oil and watercolours.

For Ratheesh Sundaram, a former photojournalist, this exhibition was a first as a photo artist. Ratheesh, who has been involved in film photography since he was young, says his untitled works were open to interpretation. "I purposely left them untitled so viewers could understand them as they wish. The images on display were are from my travels," shared Ratheesh.

"I enjoy working with black-and-white images since there is no hindrance or distraction, as one finds in colour pictures," said Rateesh.

An artist and playwright, Selmin Sheriff has been part of the painting scene for over 10 years now. Socio-political and humanity-related issues are a recurring theme in his work, says the artist whose preferred medium is oil on canvas.

For his fifth show with ABC, Selmin said: "One of my newer paintings is about gender and patriarchy. I travel and come back to my work, constantly making changes, so it evolves in an organic way. My paintings have stories in them which allow me to engage in a dialogue with my audience about those subjects."

For Sudeshna Ukil, a water-colourist, "It's all skies and green fields for this exhibition. I started as a child with chalk in my hand, drawing on the floor." Hailing from a family of artists, she grew up with an idea of art and creativity, embarking on her journey with exhibitions in 2014.

Inspired by the beauty of life, Sudeshna adds, "Every day is magical."

INBRIEF

Suresh Gopi showers more praise on Indira Gandhi

Union Minister of State for Tourism, Petroleum and Natural Gas Suresh Gopi on Sunday reiterated his admiration for former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, clarifying that his earlier comments about the Congress leader had been misinterpreted. "Indira Gandhi is the real and only architect of India, post-Independence and until her demise," he told mediapersons during a reception accorded to him at the BJP district committee office in Thiruvananthapuram. He went on to add: "Her administrative efforts cannot be ignored. I cannot ignore a leader who had sincerely toiled for the country only because she belonged to a rival party. My Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a similar stance when he had called her an Iron Lady in Parliament." His remarks came a day after he raised eyebrows by referring to the former PM as "Mother of India" in Thrissur.

Remains of three foetuses found near Kittur in Belagavi

A joint operation by the police and Health Department officials has helped in finding the remains of three foetuses at a farmhouse of a man masquerading as a doctor in Tigadoli near Kittur in Belagavi district of Karnataka on Sunday.

The team of officials began exhuming the ground around the farmhouse of Abdulgafar Hussainsaab Ladkhan, a quack from Hanchinal village. Ladkhan ran a clinic in Kittur where he performed illegal abortions and female foeticide. The police suspected that he is also involved in sale of infants.

His assistant, Rohit Kuppasgoudar, has been arrested in this connection.

The offence came to light when officers of the Malmaruti Police Station arrested five people, including Ladkhan, in connection with the sale of a month-old infant in Belagavi a few days ago.

3 BJP leaders arrested after communal tension in Medak

The police say a clash broke out after a madrasa in the town bought cattle ahead of Id-ul-Azha; members of a local group created a ruckus, injured a few persons, and attacked a hospital

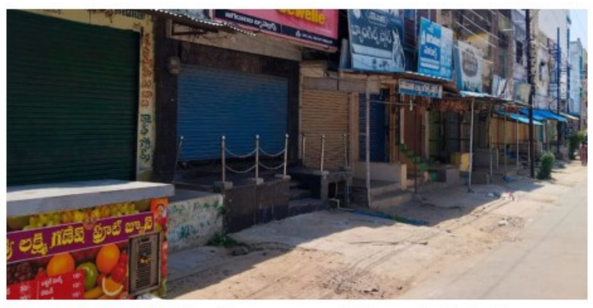
The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Medak police arrested BJP district president Gaddam Srinivas, BJP town president M. Nayam Prasad, Yuva Morcha district president and seven others in connection with the communal violence in the town in Telangana on Saturday. The police said there would be more arrests.

The police said the management of a madrasa had bought cattle ahead of Id-ul-Azha. The situation became tense after members of a local group created ruckus near the madrasa, injuring a number of people from the institution.

After they were shifted to a nearby hospital, the mob went there and caused damage by throwing stones. The police resorted to a lathi-charge to disperse the mob. Night patrolling was intensified on Saturday night.

The police invoked Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure near Ramdas Chowrasta in Medak town.



Unease in the air: After the communal violence in Medak town, a bandh was enforced on Sunday. MOHD. ARIF

Superintendent of Police B. Bala Swamy said the restrictions on gathering would be in place till Sunday night.

Raja Singh detained

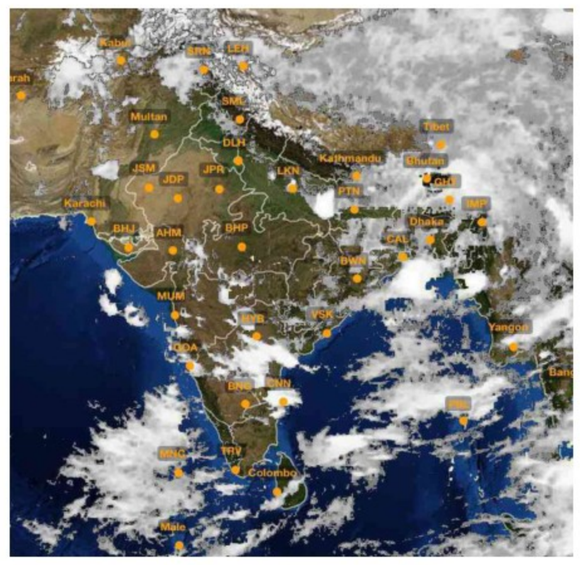
Following the incident, the Telangana police took into preventive custody the BJP legislator from Goshamahal, T. Raja Singh, at the airport in Hyderabad on Sunday.

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Sunday asked top police officials to investigate the communal incidents in Medak over the past couple of days and told them to act impartially against the culprits. The Minister sought details of the incidents, and said those responsible for breaking the law and vitiating communal amity would have to be dealt with severely. The police should stand by the victims affected by the violence and not hesitate to act against those involved in anti-social activities.

He, however, said the police should not foist cases on the innocent.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall with extremely heavy falls very likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh , Assam and Meghalaya; heavy rainfall at isolated places over Nagaland, Manipur, and Kerala. Heat wave conditions to severe heat wave conditions very likely in most parts of Uttar Pradesh, and in isolated pockets over Bihar and Jharkhand.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.6	35.0	26.1	Kozhikode	—	33.7	26.7
Ahmedabad	—	40.3	29.4	Kurnool	—	36.4	25.6
Aizawl	21.0	31.2	22.1	Lucknow	—	45.6	31.4
Allahabad	—	47.6	35.2	Madurai	—	39.1	26.5
Bengaluru	—	30.1	21.0	Mangaluru	9.0	30.0	24.0
Bhopal	—	39.6	27.2	Mumbai	—	33.8	26.5
Bhubaneswar	—	38.5	26.0	Mysuru	—	30.9	—
Chandigarh	—	44.4	31.3	New Delhi	—	45.3	31.2
Chennai	—	38.8	29.1	Patna	—	43.0	29.5
Coimbatore	—	33.6	24.4	Port Blair	0.5	32.4	26.7
Dehradun	—	42.8	27.9	Puducherry	—	38.8	27.8
Gangtok	6.0	20.2	18.7	Pune	2.5	35.2	24.6
Goa	21.0	29.0	25.8	Raipur	—	39.3	28.9
Guwahati	19.0	28.0	24.6	Ranchi	—	39.0	24.5
Hubballi	—	29.0	24.0	Shillong	24.0	23.0	17.4
Hyderabad	—	34.9	25.9	Shimla	—	31.0	20.5
Imphal	1.0	27.4	17.7	Srinagar	—	32.2	15.7
Jaipur	—	42.5	32.6	Thiruvananthapuram	0.4	33.5	24.8
Kochi	5.0	31.4	25.0	Tiruchi	—	38.1	27.4
Kohima	6.0	24.0	16.4	Vijayawada	—	40.4	28.0
Kolkata	—	36.4	29.3	Visakhapatnam	0.7	34.5	25.7

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.25	202	.39	68	82	
Bengaluru	.18	..39	.64	.....—	83	
Chennai	...6	7	.90	...115	90	
Delhi	.34	..—	.54	...317	...178	
Hyderabad	.10	..11	.28	68	77	
Kolkata	...6	..28	.26	35	89	
Lucknow	.16	..51	.49	...233	...180	
Mumbai	..—	..37	109	23	47	
Pune	..—	..15	.36	13	27	
Visakhapatnam	.10	..52	.21	52	...107	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Dhanbad, Jharkhand recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 356 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Gangtok, Sikkim recorded a healthy AQI score of 21

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

INDIA bloc is a conglomerate of opportunists and dynasts: Annamalai

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

BJP Tamil Nadu president K. Annamalai on Sunday described the INDIA bloc as a "conglomerate of opportunists, dynasts, and corrupt" who, despite fighting an election together, did not cross the number of seats that the BJP won independently.

"All 13 parties [in the INDIA bloc] which have at least one MP could only win 232 seats in total, as against the BJP's [independent] tally of 240. The DMK has made it a habit to cover its administrative failures by celebrating matters that are of no interest to the people of Tamil Nadu. In one such celebration on Saturday, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin spoke about 'moral victory' over the BJP. In Tamil, there is a fable of a man dreaming of going to a city, to which there are no paths for one to reach. Mr. Stalin is currently living in that city through this 'moral victory'," Mr. Annamalai posted on X (formerly Twitter).

K. Annamalai

He further said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been showing the highest respect for the Constitution since his days as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, contrary to Mr. Stalin's claim that he was reminded of the Constitution only now.

"Mr. Stalin is a Chief Minister who has shown utter disregard for the Constitution by stonewalling programmes implemented by the Central government," he said, adding that Mr. Stalin should be the last person to "give lectures on the Constitution".

CPI(M) begins post-poll stocktaking exercise

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Faced with a reversal of fortunes in the Lok Sabha elections, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] top leadership convened here on Sunday to sift through the reasons of defeat as part of a five-day stocktaking exercise.

The presence of CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury and Polit Bureau member Prakash Karat underscored the significance of the meetings, which will conclude on Wednesday.

The party would reportedly examine reports from 20 Lok Sabha constituency committees and 14 district committees in detail.

The CPI(M) appeared particularly taken aback by a perceived rightward drift in the Backward Class, Dalit, and a section of Christian voters, which some believe had seriously undercut the Left Democratic Front's political support in large swathes of the State and advantaged the BJP in the Thrissur constituency and gave the latter a clear lead in 11 Assembly segments.

CPI(M) leaders Sitaram Yechury, M.A. Baby and party MP-elect K. Radhakrishnan during an event in Thrissur. X/@SITARAMYECHURY

Notably, the CPI(M)'s post-poll analysis meetings unfolded against the backdrop of criticism that the government's "omissions and commissions" had paved the way for the United Democratic Front's stunning victory and the BJP's good showing at the hustings.

Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) State president Sadikali Shihab Thangal had pointedly accused the CPI(M) of allowing the BJP to gain a toehold in Kerala.

At the other end of the political spectrum, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam leader Vellappally Natesan said the CPI (M) sway towards minorities had pushed backward classes and Dalit communities to the BJP.

In a grievance-ridden screed published in the social organisation's mouthpiece *Yoganadam*, Mr. Natesan cautioned that the CPI(M)'s electoral prospects would lie in tatters if the party continued disregarding its core support base.

The CPI(M) would also reportedly consider whether the Lok Sabha poll results were an oblique referendum on the Pinarayi Vijayan government. CPI(M) State secretary M.V. Govindan had blamed the party's poor showing at the hustings on capitalist-bourgeoise drift in the "second Pinarayi Vijayan government" and "misplaced governance priorities," including non-payment of social welfare pensions.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan seized on the statement to allege that Mr. Govindan and the Chief Minister were poles apart on the reasons for the LDF's defeat.

He said Mr. Vijayan's statement that there was no resentment against the government was at odds with Mr. Govindan's position.

SNDP leader seeks economic survey of Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes in Kerala

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan has called for a socio-economic survey of the Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes among the Hindus to "have an understanding of the inequalities they face".

In a scathing article in the *Yoganadam* magazine, the SNDP's mouthpiece, which appeared with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cover image, he contrasted their plight to that of the minority communities in Kerala, who, he said, had made major gains in recent years from the appeasement policies of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF). He attributed the gains made by the BJP in Thrissur, Alappuzha and other constituencies in the Lok Sabha election to the minority appeasement of both the fronts, with the Ezhava community shifting away from the LDF.

Vellappally Natesan

Mr. Natesan's comments come close on the heels of a controversy over his remarks made soon after the election, when he said the Muslim community had been getting undue favours from the LDF.

Hussain Madavoor, leader of the Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen, recently resigned from the post of vice-chairperson of the Navodhana Samrakshana Samiti (Renaissance Protection Forum) headed by Mr. Natesan.

'Overfed' on parottas, five cows die in Kollam

The Hindu Bureau
KOLLAM

Five cows died and nine head of cattle fell ill on a farm at Velinallur after the animals were "fed too many *parottas*".

Minister for Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development J. Chinchurani, who visited the farm on Sunday, said that the dairy farmer would be given compensation.

An autopsy conducted by the department found that the cows died due to metabolic toxaemia and dehydration subsequent to lactic acidosis after they consumed too many *parottas* and jackfruit.

Veil blows off lavish constructions atop Rushikonda

The Hindu Bureau
VISAKHAPATNAM

Lifting the veil of secrecy over the constructions on top of the iconic Rushikonda Hill adjacent to the sea in Visakhapatnam, TDP's Bheemunipatnam MLA-elect Ganta Srinivasa Rao, along with cadres of the TDP and the Jana Sena Party (JSP), barged into the controversial site on Sunday and was 'aghast at the sight of the opulent buildings that resembled more of a residence-cum-camp office of the Chief Minister rather than tourism resorts as had been claimed by the previous YSRCP government'.

Mr. Srinivasa Rao and his supporters checked each and every room in all the seven blocks, which were reportedly constructed at a whopping cost of ₹500 crore.

Mr. Srinivasa Rao, who was accompanied by JSP Bheemunipatnam incharge Panchakarla Sandeep, first entered the block touted to be the Chief Minister's residence, where they saw lavish living rooms, bedrooms, washrooms, kitchen, furniture, lights, interior decors, landscaping, and elevators.

"These buildings resemble a CM's residence and camp office. They do not have living rooms meant for tourists like in a three-star or five-star hotels at all. The YSRCP government cheated people by claiming that the constructions are in fact resorts, or a five-star hotel," the TDP leader told the media later.

Opposition leader N. Chandrababu Naidu and JSP chief Pawan Kalyan were not allowed to enter the site, and a number of cases had been booked against the TDP and JSP activists, Mr. Srinivasa Rao alleged.

The plush inner view of the constructions at Rushikonda in Visakhapatnam. THE HINDU

"There will be no objection when a CM wants to have a camp office at any place in the State. But what former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has done is undemocratic. Initially, the YSRCP government said it was a five-star resort. The previous dispensation destroyed the scenic Rushikonda, where 'Saptha Rushis' were believed to have meditated," the TDP leader said.

There should be transparency in the constructions undertaken by the government, and its estimates should be revealed. "But the YSRCP government maintained secrecy. Moreover, there are a number of violations in the construction of this 'Raja Mahal'. This may be the most controversial constructions in India," Mr. Srinivasa Rao said.

"Mr. Naidu, who took over as Chief Minister recently, will be arriving in Visakhapatnam in a few days. He will visit Rushikonda and decide what can be done with these lavish constructions," he added. "It will be a Herculean task for the government to bring them to public use," Mr. Srinivasa Rao opined.

Probe activities of TTD during Jagan's regime: BJP leader

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

BJP spokesman and former member of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Trust Board G. Bhanu Prakash Reddy has demanded a judicial inquiry into the activities of the TTD in the past five years.

Addressing mediapersons here on Sunday, he alleged that the previous Jagan Mohan Reddy government had misused the revenue of the TTD and tried to "capture the properties" of the world famous temple.

He said the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders converted the TTD into their fiefdom, and accused Trust Board former chairman Bhumana Karunakar Reddy of taking commissions in the development works. He alleged that the YSRCP leaders had facilitated various Arjitha sevas at the temple for their near and dear ones through questionable means.

Mr. Bhanu Reddy advised Mr. Jagan Reddy not to make baseless charges against the government formed by the TDP-BJP-JSP alliance, having been taught a befitting lesson in the elections for his "atrocious rule." The new government would fulfil its commitments in the due course, he added.

Criminalising words

Speeches that do not instigate violence should not be deemed unlawful activity

The grant of sanction to prosecute writer-activist Arundhati Roy and academician Sheikh Showkat Hussain for alleged "unlawful activity" in a case dating back to 2010 is unwarranted. Delhi Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena, who had accorded sanction in October 2023 to prosecute the Booker Prize-winning writer and the former Kashmir University professor, respectively, for allegedly divisive speeches and imputations against national unity, has now given his nod for invoking Section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for the same set of speeches. The earlier sanction order was in his capacity as the appropriate authority on behalf of the Delhi government under Section 196 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The recent one is, presumably, on behalf of the Central government, the appropriate authority to sanction prosecution for offences under Chapter III of the UAPA, under which Section 13 falls. The resurrection of this old case is an unfortunate instance of ill-motivated prosecution. The only possible explanation for the revival of this case, registered on a magistrate court's order in 2010, is that the present regime has found it expedient only now to do so, as part of its continuing crackdown on dissenters and outspoken critics. The eight-month gap between the two sanction orders is inexplicable, as the same material would have been placed before the sanctioning authority.

The regime at the Centre then did not deem it appropriate to prosecute the speakers at the conference held in Delhi in October 2010. Even though the Bharatiya Janata Party, then in the opposition, pressed for it, the Delhi police did not consider the speeches seditious. Its reluctance was possibly because the Centre did not want to jeopardise efforts to find a solution to the Kashmir problem through designated interlocutors. When a complaint was filed before a Magistrate, the court asked for a police report, but the Delhi police did not think the speeches warranted prosecution for sedition. However, on November 27, 2010, the Metropolitan Magistrate rejected the police stand and directed registration of a First Information Report. The FIR included Section 13 of UAPA, which seeks to punish "unlawful activities". Speeches made at the conference may have contained imputations about the status of Kashmir, but it is doubtful if a mere speech, in the absence of a call to arms or instigation of violence, would amount to "unlawful activity" under UAPA. In any case, much has changed in the ground situation, especially in the aftermath of the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status in 2019 and its division into two Union Territories. The new coalition regime should move away from the earlier era's obsession with stamping out dissenting views and put an end to its propensity to criminalise speeches.

Two steps back

India needs to close the gender gap in education and politics

Gender parity may be climbing upwards worldwide with the global gender gap standing at 68.5% closed in 2024, but the glacial pace of change – it was 68.4% in 2023 – is a grim statistic. At this rate, it will take 134 years to reach full parity, the Global Gender Gap report released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) last week pointed out, "roughly five generations beyond the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target". Iceland maintains its number 1 rank (93.5%), and is also the only economy to have closed over 90% of its gender gap. India has slipped two places to 129 out of 146 countries. Last year, it was ranked 127, after having jumped eight places from 135 in 2022. India has closed 64.1% of its gender gap in 2024, the report noted, leaving policy-makers with a huge window of opportunity to do better. The "slight regression," according to the report, is mainly due to "small declines" in the spheres of education and political empowerment. With a population of over 140 crore, even two steps back mean staggering numbers. Though India, it pointed out, had shown a slight improvement in economic participation and opportunity for the last few years, it would need 6.2 percentage points more to match its 2012 score of 46%.

One way of achieving the objective will be through bridging gender gaps in, say, the labour force participation rate (45.9%). To do that, a slew of measures must be in place, from ensuring that girls do not drop out of higher education, providing them job skills, ensuring safety at the workplace, and helping them keep a job after marriage by sharing responsibility for chores at home. In education, the gap between men and women's literacy rate is 17.2 percentage points wide, leaving India ranked 124th on this indicator. India has fared better in the political empowerment index, but women's representation in Parliament continues to be low. For confirmation, look no further than the newly elected Lok Sabha. Close to 800 women contestants were in the fray, but the number of women Members of Parliament has dipped to 74 from 78 (2019) of 543 members, which is 13.6% of the total. These numbers are not a good sign in the backdrop of the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, yet to come into effect, which aims to reserve one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and State legislative Assemblies for women. All under-performing countries, including India, must heed WEF Managing Director Saadia Zahidi's words, calling for "Governments to strengthen the framework conditions needed for business and civil society to work together to make gender parity an economic imperative".

The general election of 2024, its true verdict

M.K. Narayanan

is a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

Many iterations of the verdict in the just concluded 2024 general election exist. One thing is, however, obvious – *viz.*, that there were no clear winners. The election threw up a split verdict – the National Democratic Alliance, or NDA, 294, and the INDIA bloc crossing the 230 mark, reversing a trend seen during the 2014 and 2019 general elections, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as a clear winner and Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the messiah.

Has democracy won?

A lot has again been written again about the nature of the verdict: primarily, that democracy had won and right-wing forces (more specifically the BJP) had been defeated. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Indian voter, essentially the rural voter, did prove discerning, no doubt, and gave a reasonable opportunity to the Opposition to alter the trajectory of the past decade, by forming a 'coalition of the willing'. This could then have been viewed as a clear message against 'authoritarianism'. Instead, a disunited Opposition failed to take advantage of the situation. The INDIA bloc which had failed to firm up a coalition prior to the election, failed once again to unite when the time came for ministry formation post the election. In that sense, the Opposition failed the Indian voter.

The BJP-led alliance managed a slim victory, though the BJP's tally, of 240, fell well short of a simple majority. The party lost 63 seats as compared to its 2019 tally (303 seats), and was compelled to depend on the Telugu Desam Party, or TDP (16 seats), the Janata Dal (United), or JD(U) (12 seats), the Lok Janshakti Party(Ram Vilas) with five seats and a motley set of other allies to cross the magic figure of 272. The Congress, with 99 seats, and the Samajwadi Party, with 37 seats, reflect, in turn, the nature of the churn that has taken place this time. Nevertheless, it is a mistake, as many analysts have been wont to do, to say that extreme right tendencies have been curbed. For democracy to succeed in such a situation, there was every need for deft handling, and a clear understanding of what requires to be done. What the INDIA bloc gained at the hustings, was lost when the combination failed to 'seize the moment', and allowed the BJP to inveigle the TDP and the JD(U) to share the spoils of office. The winner has been the Prime Minister. Narendra Modi, through stratagems, rather than an electoral verdict, achieved his ambition of becoming India's Prime Minister for the third time.

All that can be said for now, is that the election outcome could possibly lower the risk of the country sliding towards autocracy. How long such a situation will prevail is, however, uncertain. In Prime Minister Modi's thought processes, the verdict is not a repudiation of his doctrine of how to wield power, though an overwhelming mandate could have helped set the seal on his majoritarian outlook. This can well be discerned from a careful reading of the Prime Minister's post-election statements. In his third term, the Prime Minister appears set to prove yet again, that he is no consensus builder or that he would give up his polarising views.

The election outcome could possibly lower the risk of India sliding towards autocracy

Reading the signs

Already, the signs are there for all to see. The new Cabinet and Council of Ministers remain essentially the same. This is as good a sign as any that the Prime Minister does not think it necessary to effect a change or even consult anyone in any such exercise. Again, everything points to the Prime Minister dealing with his new Cabinet and his new Council of Ministers in the same fashion as previously. It appears extremely unlikely that any major shifts from past practices, or in terms of future legislation, will occur. The past practice of asserting arbitrary authority to achieve ends that the Prime Minister considers desirable, is hence, likely to continue. This will remain the Prime Minister's leitmotif this time around as well.

More to the point, there seems to be little hope that the Prime Minister, while pushing for multi-polarity on the global stage and seeking a greater say for the Global South internationally, would apply the same logic to the situation in India. The Prime Minister does not see the election results as a verdict for a change in direction. Rather, he possibly believes that more of the same might have produced better results. Hence, there is little hope that the Prime Minister would moderate the use of central investigative agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate against all and sundry. Again, Mr. Modi will be fixated on urban India, which in this election gave him maximum support. He is unlikely to make concessions to working-class voter families, and informal workers, especially those in the rural areas. The announcement of 'Kisan Nidhi' should not, hence, be viewed as a nod in favour of rural farm workers.

A hurt, but not wounded, Narendra Modi is likely to be a far greater threat to democracy and democratic traditions, than was the Mr. Modi at the end of March. Nothing could have been more galling for him – that of his own majority in Varanasi shrank from the more than four lakh votes he got in 2019 to 1.5 lakh votes this time. Equally disappointing would have been the fact that in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP suffered a shock defeat at the hands of the Samajwadi Party (SP). Also after having spent so much time and effort on the Ram Temple issue, the BJP lost the Faizabad seat (where Ayodhya is located), to a relatively unknown opponent from the SP. Even lesser mortals would have reason to feel chagrined that fate had dealt such a cruel blow. Being Modi, he would seek avenues to overcome this insult. Hence, the worst is yet to come.

The Prime Minister was at the G-7 in Italy as an invitee. While accepting the invitation he, no doubt, believed that as India's third-time Prime Minister, he would have another opportunity to strut on the international stage, as had been the case when the G-20 was held in Delhi in 2023. But knowing the Prime Minister, he will try to convert what in effect was a defeat into victory.

The road ahead

India must be prepared, as there is not much hope, given the disjointed nature of the Opposition. Whether the Opposition and the country can withstand the battering that the Prime Minister is likely to unleash is yet to be seen. Together with announcing a whole new package of programmes aimed at enhancing his stature, the Prime Minister can be expected to be even more intolerant of the Opposition. He is unlikely to tolerate any attempt to moderate some of the actions that he had taken during his previous tenures. The misuse of investigative and other agencies can be expected to continue.

For Mr. Modi, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections were his project, and his project alone. He had invoked god himself to achieve his objective. He is, hence, unlikely to allow mere mortals to checkmate and prevent him from achieving his desired objective. The rural poor may cavil at several of Mr. Modi's policies, but India Inc. is bound to act as cheerleaders. The United States and the West, in the meantime, can be expected to continue to provide the Prime Minister the kind of international acclaim that he craves.

India's hopes lie less with a pusillanimous Opposition, than of a division in the NDA, and more so in the BJP itself. In regard to the BJP, the Prime Minister's refusal to consult with the 'high priests' of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has reportedly angered them. This has been the case for some time. If divisions get exacerbated, this could have a material impact on the BJP and its future, but it is uncertain as of now whether, or how, this could happen. Again, with the denting of the Prime Minister's image as a winner having taken a beating, there is reason to believe that voices are beginning to be raised within the BJP against the Prime Minister's autocratic attitude and behaviour. The big question mark, nevertheless, is how and whether the Prime Minister can adjust to the reality that he is no god, given that the mandate proved he is not invincible.

High Court's take on Marriage Act, an erosion of rights

Manuraj Shunmuga-sundaram

is a media spokesperson for the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and advocate practising before the High Court of Madras. He appeared for the petitioners in the case where the Madras High Court granted protection to a same-sex couple

Haripriya Venkatakrishnan

is an advocate practising before the High Court of Madras

A problematic order from the Madhya Pradesh High Court has given rise to the likelihood of a misinterpretation of the law around inter-faith marriages and a calling into question the scope of the Special Marriage Act, 1954. If unresolved, this could potentially lead to consequences contrary to the objectives of the Act, which sought to provide a viable legal avenue for inter-religious marriages.

The issue has risen out of a petition that sought protection for an inter-faith marriage, jointly filed by an unmarried Hindu-Muslim couple before the Madhya Pradesh High Court. While hearing the arguments, the High Court went into the question of whether such a marriage of "a Muslim boy with a Hindu girl" under the Act would constitute a "valid marriage or not". The High Court then proceeded to not grant police protection to the unmarried couple on the grounds that theirs would amount to an invalid marriage. By doing so, the High Court has reversed the gains in the jurisprudence on the right to choice of partner and has rewritten the well-settled objectives of the Special Marriage Act.

Erroneous considerations

It is common practice that when a petition seeking police protection is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, the High Court looks into the violation of rights of the petitioners and the extent of threat faced by them. Such petitions are usually filed by couples in inter-faith and inter-caste marriages. However, it is now seen that even in cases of unmarried persons, High Courts have extended them protection after considering the various threats emanating from society. In similar circumstances, Justice N. Anand Venkatesh of the High Court of Madras recognised the precarious situation encountered by same-sex couples and granted police protection to a lesbian couple.

Similarly, the Punjab and Haryana High Court granted police protection to a live-in couple holding that "the key issue at hand is not the legality of the petitioners" relationship, qua which they may be liable for civil as well as criminal consequences in accordance with law, but whether they are entitled to protection of their fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution".

In contrast, the Madhya Pradesh High Court, without weighing in on the real and apparent dangers faced by an inter-faith couple and adjudicating on the prayer for protection based on a threat assessment, has gone into the merits of an impending marriage itself. Even if the couple does not get their marriage registered, their claim for protection ought to have been decided in accordance with Article 21 of the Constitution, which provides for the protection of the right to life and liberty of an individual.

The M.P. High Court order goes against the very basis of the Special Marriage Act

Dilution of the Special Marriage Act

Another serious concern is that the order passed by the Madhya Pradesh High Court goes against the very basis and objects of the Special Marriage Act. The order refers to a precedent from the Supreme Court of India in *Mohammed Salim vs Shamsudeen* (2019), a case which dealt with the issue of property succession arising out of a marriage between a Muslim man and Hindu woman under the Mohammedan Laws. This judgment should never have been considered as a precedent in either deciding the validity of an inter-faith marriage or for police protection.

The order also goes into Section 4 of the Special Marriage Act which excludes marriages between persons within the "prohibited degrees of relationship". The reliance of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on this prohibition is entirely untenable and factually flawed as this provision only bars marriages between those who are related. By doing so, the High Court failed to recognise that the objective of the Act is to facilitate marriage between any two Indian nationals "irrespective of the faith with either party to the marriage may profess".

The India of today and special marriages

The Madhya Pradesh High Court order assumes importance in the current social and political climate, where there is a real threat of vigilantism against inter-faith and inter-caste marriages, which do not have the sanction of the parents. The love jihad conspiracy, right-wing propaganda and consequent vigilantism have directly challenged our constitutional morality. While these are yet to be resolved, there is also a batch of petitions challenging unconstitutional provisions within the Special Marriage Act, such as prior notice which are pending before the Supreme Court. Tying these together is a common thread of individual autonomy, liberty, and equality. The Supreme Court in *Shafin Jahan vs Asokan K.M.* (2018), held that "intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy, which is inviolable". Dealing with a case of inter-faith marriage, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, as he was then, wrote that "social approval for intimate personal decisions is not the basis for recognising them" and further, that "the Constitution protects personal liberty from disapproving audiences".

The *ratio decidendi* of the Shafin Jahan case has the effect of prioritising the absolute right of an individual to choose a life partner over any consideration of faith or caste-based diktats. With the spirit of this judgment having been lost sight of in recent years, it is wholly necessary for constitutional courts across the country to keep in mind that the arc of jurisprudence bends towards autonomy, privacy and liberty.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No to 'love thy neighbour'

The report, "Residents oppose allotment of flat under CM scheme to a Muslim woman in Gujarat" (Inside pages, June 15), was shocking. There appears to be a weakening of secularity in present-day Indian society. Such a scenario threatens the amicable co-existence of many.

Chetan Datta Poduri,
Hyderabad

It was painful to read that several residents were against the allotment of the flat to the woman. Is Indian society getting balkanised on the basis of caste and religion? Where are we headed? One hopes that the Vadodara Municipal Corporation and saner representatives will prevail upon the residents and convince them that we are all Indians and need to co-exist peacefully.

C.S. Ravikumar,
Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

State of welfare schemes

A prominent leader of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, while campaigning in Attur, Salem, recently, said that "Telangana and Karnataka have adopted the Chief Minister's free breakfast scheme for students". The leader added, "Besides other States, Canada President Justin Trudeau had hailed it as the best scheme and declared its implementation in their country." One wonders whether the leader knew that the meal scheme was introduced by the leaders, K. Kamaraj and M.G. Ramachandran, who expanded it. The report, "Everyone loves a hot, cheap meal" (Tamil Nadu, June 16), on the state of the Amma Canteens under the DMK regime, was an eye-opener. It is clear that the poor have been affected. If this is the state of the Amma canteens — a scheme by the DMK's political rival — one wonders what state the DMK's schemes are in.

N. Mahadevan,
Chennai

Travel notes

The same and embarrassing situation arose when I travelled with my son on a direct flight from Mumbai to San Francisco to meet my granddaughter. It was a short trip.

Being a senior citizen, my seat had been booked in premium economy class, while my son was in economy. Two young lady students, who were pursuing an educational course in the United States, were seated next to me. One of the girls asked me whether I could sit in the middle section so that they could sit together. Given my age — I am 87 years old — and being a very long flight, I politely said, "Very sorry, a window seat will be very comfortable for me." After reaching San Francisco, I was surprised to know that the two girls were close friends of my granddaughter! An "unexpected connection amid the clouds" ('Open page – Magazine', June 16).

D. Sethuraman,
Chennai

Under Kafala, workers are dispensable

Vani Saraswathi

is the director of projects and editor-at-large of Migrant-Rights.Org, a GCC-based research and advocacy organisation

Within hours of the fatal fire that killed 49 migrant workers – a majority of whom are Indians – in Mangaf area of Al Ahmadi municipality, Kuwait, several actions were taken immediately. Kuwait's Interior Minister Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah said the fatalities were due to the greed of the employer and building owner – in this instance, both parties being the same, NBTC; he announced the company officials would be held criminally liable; and officials of the municipality were suspended for their failure to maintain building codes.

In the coming days, more announcements will be made and a few heads will roll. The names of the 49 dead are unlikely to be shared officially by Kuwait but will appear in the media in India and the Philippines. It is easy to replace a number, recruit anew and bring in more workers to fill the gap left behind by those who perished. To humanise them would mean to acknowledge their presence as more than just labour and entail safeguarding all of the rights of the migrant population, and that would only be possible by dismantling the all-pervasive Kafala system – a complex of laws and practices that ensure state and citizens hold all the power, while individual migrants are treated as temporary even if the dependency on their labour is near-permanent. This is why any announcement by Kuwait promising action must be scrutinised minutely.

Kuwait (foreigners comprise 70% of its 4.3 million) and the rest of the GCC states (Saudi, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman), in essence, follow the same practice with varying degrees of control over migration and migrants. These six states are home to roughly 35 million migrant workers, accounting for 10% of all international migrants, and Indians constitute the single largest group amongst them.

Let us look at the immediate concern – crowded, unsafe and unhygienic labour accommodation that makes its residents most vulnerable to any exigencies that may arise in a country. Just a few years ago, when the world came to a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic, GCC states struggled to contain the spread of the virus in these labour accommodations. Kuwait had some of the most discriminatory lockdown practices, particularly in areas densely populated by migrant workers and announced an amnesty, deporting tens of thousands of workers at the height of the pandemic in April 2020. No lessons were learned then, and tragedies recur in different forms.

Kuwait does have some kind of code on standards for workers' accommodation but its focus has been more on evicting 'bachelors' from family zones and moving them to subpar living spaces than to actually ensure employers provide suitable accommodation. As per Kuwait's labour law, employers engaged in government contracts (such as NBTC) must provide suitable housing or an allowance – 25% of wages if they earn the minimum wage (KD75) or 15% if paid above the minimum wage. The cost of decent living is roughly KD200 per person, not including rent. The extremely low value placed on their labour determines their place in the economic hierarchy.

This huge discrepancy between the cost of living and minimum wage is one of the critical control factors of the Kafala system. Work and residence visas are tied to the employer, ensuring they have a stranglehold over their employees' lives. For the nearly three million migrants in Kuwait's low-income belt, this means absolute dependency on the employer for accommodation, food and transportation. The minimum salary requirement to sponsor a family in Kuwait is KD800, so the majority of migrants are unable to bring their families. By keeping wages so low, Kuwait and the other Gulf states ensure that workers are perpetually vulnerable. They have no choice but to live in the poor housing provided, struggle with the quality of food, and occupy as little socio-cultural space as possible in the countries they help build.

The Mangaf tragedy has been technically attributed to an electric short circuit. But the root cause clearly is the systemic indifference of the state towards the rights and well-being of low-income workers and the gross negligence of the employer.

There are many 'IFs' as to how this tragedy could have been averted. If the employer had better safety checks, if the state had deemed them important enough to earn better and live better, but most importantly, if the workers could organise themselves, then they would have had a collective voice to air their grievances and demand better treatment.

But GCC states do not take kindly to any form of labour organising or unionisation. To allow workers to have a voice is to allow them to challenge the status quo. The easiest way to prevent this is to keep wages low enough that the workers are in a constant state of financial insecurity, and then to deport them with ease at the first sign of protest or discontent. In the heat of the aftermath, Kuwaiti officials will make promises of better safety standards and more stringent penalties but will depend on policing of employers and workers to implement this, and shy away from systemic changes that would best enforce the law. That would be to empower workers, the 'beneficiary' of these reforms, to raise their voices against the injustices they may face.

Footnote: Domestic Workers, who constitute 27% of the entire labour force in Kuwait, are excluded from the labour law, and are amongst the most marginalised of the migrant population. This opinion piece does not have the scope to address the aggravated vulnerabilities they face.

Promises in the wake of the Kuwait fire need to be scrutinised, for it is far easier to replace labour than ensure safeguards for the migrant worker population

More than that meets the eye

Maharashtra's factional politics promise a tough Assembly fight

STATE OF PLAY

Parimal Maya Sudhakar
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Lok Sabha election results sprung two surprises in Maharashtra's politics, casting shadows on the upcoming Assembly polls.

The first was an impressive show by Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena. It not only scored a much better strike rate than its allies but also defeated Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) in seven seats out of the 13 contests between them. A silver lining for the latter was the three seats it won in Mumbai and a narrow controversial defeat in Mumbai North-West.

Three inferences can be drawn from this result. One, Hindutva votes of Shiv Sena considerably remained with BJP and Shinde's Sena. Two, the issue of Marathi Asmita (pride) provided an edge for Mr. Thackeray in Mumbai but did not work well in the rest of Maharashtra. In Mumbai, he was able to forge a better combination of voters having faith in secular, democratic and federal (emphasis on linguistic and regional pride) polity. Three, his party lagged in proper election campaigns, including microscopic booth management, compared to strong local candidates from BJP and Shinde's Sena.

Over the years, Shiv Sena had grown with the consolidation of positions by local satraps in respective constituencies. Mr. Shinde from Thane is a prime example of this and many such Sena leaders sided with him. Many MLAs with Mr. Shinde can deliver victory in the Assembly election with the combination of their own cultivated influence in the constituency and the BJP's loyal Hindutva votes. This has worked for Shinde's Shiv Sena in the Lok Sabha election.

Overall, Mr. Shinde has consolidated his position as the Chief Minister and the two ambitious Deputy Chief Ministers - Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar - now have to deal with him. Ironically, Mr. Fadnavis can no longer afford to be seen hand in glove with Mr. Ajit Pawar in trying to clip Mr. Shinde's wings. His association with Mr. Ajit Pawar is being pointed out as one of the main reasons for the BJP's drubbing in the election.

On the other hand, Mr. Ajit Pawar must be realising how much ideology matters in politics. A large number of minorities, Dalit and women voters, who have been voting for him in his Assembly constituency of Baramati, turned their back on him in the Lok Sabha election. While he would not mind returning to Sharad Pawar's fold and the latter's supporters are eager to welcome him back, it is unlikely to happen before the Assembly election. The octogenarian Pawar knows well that a sympathy wave for him will cease to exist if he shakes hands with Mr. Ajit Pawar. Even then, in the long term, he and his party will need Mr. Ajit Pawar to tackle a rejuvenated Congress in Maharashtra.

It is significant that Congress contested 15 seats against BJP and won 11 seats, which has reduced BJP to the miserable tally of nine seats in the State. An exceptional Congress performance can be attributed to Rahul Gandhi's credibility and local cadre in the State. Congress has two different types of cadres. One, grassroots leaders who can mobilise voters based on caste affiliations and kinships. Two, conscious individuals who help in creating narrative at the grassroots level. When these individuals succeed in creating a narrative on the ground, the caste and kin mobilisation do not become blatant. At the same time, not having a dominant State leader provided space for sub-regional and district-level leaders to work for the Congress candidate in their own constituency or a constituency of their choice. These combinations of factors have placed Congress in a commanding position vis-a-vis the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT).

This has created an awkward situation for Mr. Thackeray. Since 2019, he has been consciously attempting to fill in the vacuum created by the retreat of Congress in the State's politics. Now, Congress is back with a bang and Mr. Thackeray cannot return to the saffron fold due to Mr. Shinde's strengthened position. He must continue with the chosen politics of inclusive nationalism, federalism and democratic values. Even when he has steered a mega victory for the anti-Modi alliance in the State, his own fate is still hanging in balance.

Also, uncertainty about Mr. Ajit Pawar in the post-Lok Sabha election scene has complicated the State's politics. The only certainty is that there is much more to come in Maharashtra's politics.

The writer is an Associate Professor at MIT School of Government, Pune.

Rising cases under PoSH Act point to better reporting

However, the taboo around reporting sexual harassment in workplaces, which still exists, meant that the figures may be just the tip of an iceberg

DATA POINT

Khadija H. Colombowala
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

More and more women are getting into STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths – courses in India, resulting in them landing jobs in corporate houses, especially in the IT sector. Hence, the proportion of women in leading corporate firms has increased considerably over time. Yet, attrition rate – the percentage of employees who leave an organisation – is also, in general, higher among women than men. Women leave organisations for many reasons, including societal pressure after marriage, pregnancy, and post-pregnancy work-life balance, reasons that rarely apply to men.

Adding to the list, workplace harassment – verbal, sexual or otherwise – may also play a role in such exits. If the number of cases reported under the PoSH Act is anything to go by, a look at just the figures from the top four IT firms shows that instances are rising again after a brief pause during the pandemic. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (PoSH Act) was introduced over a decade ago to protect women against workplace sexual harassment.

In Tata Consultancy Services, 110 cases were filed under the PoSH Act in FY24, about eight times more than what it was ten years back. In Infosys, 98 cases were filed in FY24, 3.3 times more compared with FY14. In Wipro, 141 cases were filed in FY23, peaking post the pandemic. In HCL, 55 cases were filed in FY23, while between FY18 and FY22, there were only 58 such cases. **Chart 1** shows the number of PoSH complaints filed in select IT companies and the number of complaints upheld. These companies were chosen as a representative sample and also because PoSH data is properly maintained in big organisations.

While the numbers have increased over time, only a few such cases get reported officially. To understand why women, in general, especially those who are married, avoid raising such complaints, it is important to study the environment around them.

For instance, only 57% of men in India think that wives should have an equal or greater say in these decisions – making household purchases, visits to their family/relatives, how to spend the money they earn and how many children to have (**Chart 2**). Only 42% of women in India are allowed to go alone to specific places such as the market, health facility and places outside community/village (**Chart 3**). In urban India, the share is higher at 48.6%, compared with 39.2% in rural areas. Close to 23% of men agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife if he suspects that she is "unfaithful". About 26% of women say their husbands are jealous if they talk to other men.

Taking cues from the above data, it is important to question what share of women – who come to work amid lack of freedom to travel and lack power to make major decisions on their own – will accuse a man of sexually harassing them at their job, especially those with a jealous and suspicious husband willing to punish them. In this context, the increase in the numbers should be seen as a positive development as women now have a better avenue, awareness and courage to report, but the figures should be taken with a pinch of salt as they hide more than what they reveal.

Also, in May last year, the Supreme Court flagged lapses in the way the PoSH Act was implemented. It said many firms have not even constituted Internal Complaints Committees and in places which have one, members were inadequate or lacked representatives from outside the company.

Skeletons tumbling out of closet

The data for the charts were sourced from companies' annual reports and National Family Health Survey-5 (charts 2 and 3)

Chart 1: Number of PoSH complaints filed in select IT companies and the number of complaints upheld

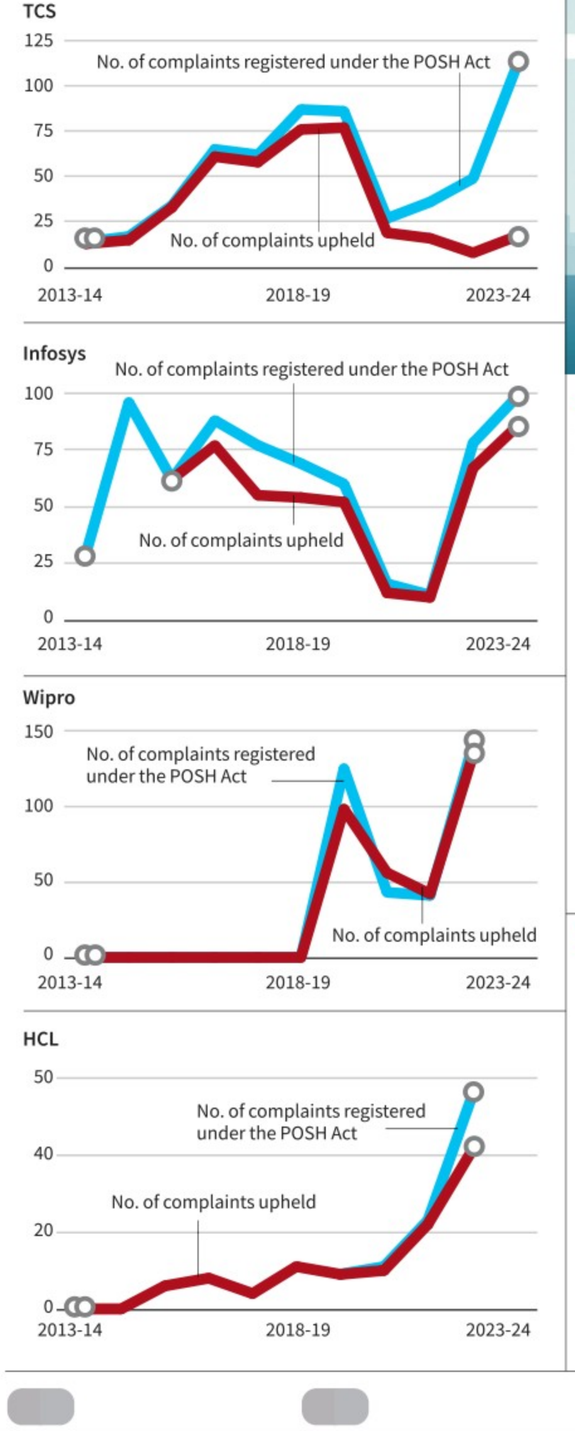


Chart 2: The chart shows the share of men who think a wife should have an equal or greater say than her husband on specific decisions such as ...

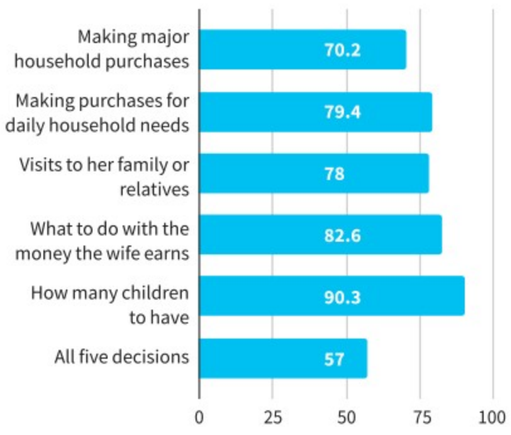
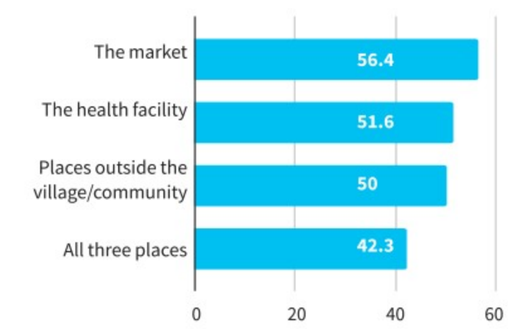


Chart 3: The chart shows the percentage of women who are allowed to go alone to...



Khadija H. Colombowala is interning with The Hindu Data Team

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 17, 1974

Sinking of INS Khukri: Limaye's Charge Rejected

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI. June 16.

The Minister of Defence, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, has rejected the allegation made by Mr. Madhu Limaye, MP, that the sinking of the Indian Navy's INS Khukri by the Pakistan Navy during the 1971 war was facilitated by the supply of defective fuel by the Indian Oil Corporation.

Mr. Jagjivan Ram, who has written to Mr. Madhu Limaye, has stated in his letter that after his investigation into the allegations, he had found that "there is no evidence that sub-standard oil was supplied". He has further said that the machinery of INS Khukri and the fuel supplied to it "were in excellent condition. No difficulty was experienced in the operation of its machinery prior to its sinking by an enemy torpedo". There was thus no cause for any apprehension that the unfortunate sinking of the ship was caused by the supply of defective fuel.

Mr. Limaye, however, in his reply to the Defence Minister, has expressed surprise "that you have dealt with the serious question of the supply of defective and inferior oil to our naval forces, ordnance factories, etc., in a casual manner. Supply of sub-standard oil can by no means be called an inadvertent action. It is a deliberate, vicious and treacherous act". He has, therefore, urged Mr. Jagjivan Ram to put this question on the agenda of the next meeting of the Defence Consultative Committee. He has also demanded a thorough enquiry into this matter and the suspension of senior officers.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 17, 1924

American World Tourists.

(ASSOCIATED PRESS OF INDIA.)

ALLAHABAD, June 16.

Captain Vanderwell and Miss Vanderwell, the American world Ford tourists, arrived in Allahabad this morning with a letter of introduction from Mr. Henry Ford to Mr. J. E. Gilbert, the Ford Agent here, whose guests they are. They will leave this evening on their way to Calcutta. They spoke well of the Indian roads generally and did not feel the heat as much as in Africa. Starting in 1919, they have passed through 39 countries and traversed 153,000 geographical miles. Miss Vanderwell is the first lady to do the world tour in a car.

From Page One

India refuses to endorse Ukraine meet statement

In a statement, the Ministry said India had attended the summit, and previous meetings at the NSA level in Jeddah in August 2023 and at the Deputy NSA level in Davos in January 2023, in line with its desire to "facilitate a lasting and peaceful resolution to the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy".

"Such a resolution requires a sincere and practical engagement between the two parties to the conflict [Russia and Ukraine]," the statement added. India's decision to attend, but distance itself from the joint statement is in line with the government's policy of abstention from all resolutions at the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, International Atomic Energy Agency and Human Rights Council thus far that are critical of Russia for its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Organisers had said the invitation to India, as well as leading countries of the Global South or BICS (referring to Brazil-India-China-South Africa or BRICS minus Russia), was especially important in order to bring about a global consensus and include their concerns on food and energy security. In a visit to India last month to press the point, Swiss Foreign Secretary Alexandre Fasel said India and fellow BICS countries could act as "go-betweens that have the trust of either side," referring to Russia and Western countries supporting Ukraine.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been invited to the Summit, where a number of world leaders except U.S. President Biden, who sent Vice-President Kamala Harris, attended, but he had declined the invitation. On the sidelines of the G-7 Outreach Summit in Italy on Friday, Mr. Modi met Mr. Zelenskyy, promising support for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Row in Mumbai over 'unlocking' of EVM

Mangesh Pandilkar, brother-in-law of Shiv Sena MP-elect Ravindra Waikar, booked by the police on charges of unauthorised mobile phone use at counting centre; Opposition raises queries on 'irregularities'; Election Commission dismisses claims that EVMs can be locked by one-time passwords

Snehal Mutha
MUMBAI

A political row erupted in Maharashtra on Sunday over allegations that a relative of Mumbai North West MP and Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena leader Ravindra Waikar used a mobile phone to generate a one-time password (OTP) that "unlocked" an electronic voting machine (EVM) during counting on June 4.

While Opposition leaders, including former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray, raised concerns about the conduct of elections and lack of transparency in scrutinising EVMs, the Election Commission (EC) dismissed the claims that EVMs could be accessed through OTPs.

The Vanrai Police in Mumbai booked Mangesh Pandilkar, brother-in-law of Mr. Waikar, on June 13 for allegedly using a mobile phone at the NESCO counting centre in Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency, which Mr. Waikar won by a margin of just 48 votes.

His rival Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Amol Kirtikar has challenged the result in court.

An ENCORE data operator of the EC too has been booked in the case which was registered based on a complaint from the poll panel on unauthorised use of mobile phone at a counting centre.

While a newspaper report suggested Mr. Pandilkar used a mobile phone to unlock an EVM through OTP, Vanrai Senior Inspector Rampiyare Rajbhar dismissed the claims.

"We have just registered the complaint over disobedience, the rest is just theory. However, after checking the phone, we have decided to send it to the Forensic Science Laboratory [FSL] for more clarity," he said.

EVMs are standalone machines that are non-programmable and have no wireless communication capabilities, the EC says. FILE PHOTO

'Fake news'

The EC too refuted claims that EVMs could be accessed through OTPs. Addressing the media in Bandra, Returning Officer Vandana Suryavanshi said, "The case is about unauthorised use of mobile phone by a candidate's aide. OTP has nothing to do with EVM. EVMs are standalone machines as they are non-programmable and have no wireless communication capabilities. They [the claims] are being used by a few leaders to create a false narrative. Counting of Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System [ETPBS] happens in physical form. Every counting sheet is signed by all counting agents after due diligence." He also warned of action against the newspaper that spread "rumours and fake news".

The EC said the Returning Officer has issued notice to the newspaper for "spreading disinformation about the EVM and creating doubts in the Indian electoral system".

Meanwhile, Mr. Waikar slammed the Opposition. "The Uddhav Thackeray faction is unable to digest its defeat and making all the noise. I am least bothered. With respect to EVM hacking, can the machines be hacked like that? Besides many had phones at the time of counting," he said.

The police said three teams have been formed to investigate the matter and they will also scan CCTV footage. The police will access call records on the mobile phone of Mr. Pandilkar, who had allegedly used the phone from the morning to 4.30 p.m., on the day of counting.

All phones used by ENCORE data operators during counting must be submitted to the Returning Officer but reports suggested that this had not happened and the police will be investigating the matter.

Opposition concerns

The Opposition raised concerns about irregularities at the polling centre and questioned whether the EC will release the CCTV footage, put Mr. Waikar's victory on hold, and explain the lapses in counting.

Mr. Aaditya Thackeray said in a post on X, "Once a traitor, always a traitor! The case of the *Mindhe* gang candidate from Northwest Mumbai gets murkier, as the *gaddar* [traitor] candidate indulges in treachery with democracy now. Surprisingly, or not, the Entirely Compromised-election commission, has refused to share CCTV footage of the counting centre."

Senior Congress leader and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan demanded the poll result of the Mumbai North West Lok Sabha seat be stayed. He said the EC must call a meeting of all parties and discuss the issue thoroughly.

Responding to the case against Mr. Pandilkar, Congress leader Mr. Gandhi said, "EVMs in India are a 'black box', and nobody is allowed to scrutinise them. Serious concerns are being raised about transparency in our electoral process. Democracy ends up becoming a sham and prone to fraud when institutions lack accountability."

Rajkot fire: two held for document tampering

Press Trust of India
RAJKOT

Two employees of the Rajkot Municipal Corporation (RMC) have been arrested for allegedly making certain changes in documents pertaining to a game zone after a fire in the city in Gujarat last month claimed 27 lives, police said on Sunday.

With this, 12 persons, including six government employees, have been arrested in the case. The city crime branch on Saturday arrested RMC's assistant town planning officer Rajesh Makwana and assistant engineer Jaideep Chaudhary for their alleged involvement in making changes in an official register after the fire.

Elon Musk and former Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar argue on EVM security

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Former Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar got into a brief dispute with Tesla founder and CEO Elon Musk over the security of electronic voting machines (EVMs). In a post on X, formerly Twitter, Mr. Musk had commented on the unreliability of these machines in response to reports of irregularities in EVMs in Puerto Rico.

Mr. Chandrasekhar responded that these concerns did not apply to Indian voting machines.

Mr. Musk was referring to a report on software issues with EVMs supplied by the American firm Dominion Voting Systems, which faced a flood of scrutiny in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential elections in the U.S.

Former Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar and Tesla founder Elon Musk had the tiff on social media platform X. FILE PHOTO

The company settled a multi-million dollar defamation suit brought by it on *Fox News*, whose anchors had cast doubts on its voting machines' integrity.

Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory, had been holding primary elections for gubernatorial polls due in November. Mr. Musk had said, "We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high."

"This is a huge sweeping generalization statement that implies no one can build secure digital hardware," Mr. Chandrasekhar responded, after the post started making the rounds in India. "Wrong. @elonmusk's view may apply to U.S. and other places where they use regular compute platforms to build Internet connected voting machines ... but Indian EVMs are custom designed, secure and isolated from any network or media ... Electronic voting machines can be architected and built right as India has done."

"Anything can be hacked," Mr. Musk responded.

Mr. Chandrasekhar then conceded that while "any level of encryption" on a computer system can be broken with sufficient power, EVM integrity was "a different type of conversation," adding "we can agree to disagree".

Bihar Police recover six post-dated cheques issued to NEET paper 'facilitators'

Press Trust of India
PATNA

The Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of the Bihar Police has recovered six post-dated cheques suspected to have been issued in favour of some "facilitators" demanding over ₹30 lakh from each candidate seeking the alleged leaked question paper ahead of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate medical courses held last month.

"During the course of investigation, EOU officials recovered six post-dated cheques that were issued in favour of criminals who reportedly facilitated question papers to the aspirants ahead of the examination," Manavjit Singh Dhillon, Deputy Inspector-General (DIG), EOU, said on Sunday.

Investigators are ascertaining details about account holders from the banks concerned, he added.

The EOU has so far arrested 13 people, including four examinees and their family members, in connection with the case.

The EOU has also issued notices to nine candidates (seven from Bihar and one each from Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra) to join the probe, he added.

Meanwhile, the Congress on Sunday said there are "serious questions" on the integrity of the National Testing Agency and the manner in which NEET is designed and administered.

The Opposition party said it was hopeful that when the new Standing Committees of Parliament get constituted, a deep review of the NEET, NTA and NCERT would be taken up.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said there have been concerns, especially from Tamil Nadu, that NEET would privilege CBSE students. "Is NEET discriminatory?," he posted on X. There are also serious questions on the integrity of the National Testing Agency itself and the manner in which NEET is designed and administered.

India ready to host its first multinational air exercise 'Tarang Shakti' in August

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force's first multinational air exercise, Tarang Shakti-2024, will be held in August, and is likely to see the participation of 10 countries, in addition to a few others acting as observers.

"Enriched with the Red Flag exercise experience, the IAF keenly looks forward to hosting the participating contingents from other countries during Tarang Shakti-2024, which is the first ever Indian multinational air exercise to be held later this year," the IAF said on Sunday in a statement on the just concluded Red Flag exercise hosted by the U.S. Air Force.

The plan is to invite friendly foreign countries with whom the IAF interacts regularly and has a certain degree of interoperability, officials said. Tarang Shakti was earlier planned to be held at the end of 2023, but got deferred. The exercise is now scheduled to be held in two phases.

Two IAF Rafale jets being refuelled mid-air by an IL-78 aircraft on their way to Exercise Red Flag in Alaska.

The first will be held in southern India in the first two weeks of August and the second will be in the western sector from the end of August to mid-September, officials said. Some countries will participate in both phases, while others will join one of the two phases, it has been learnt.

Among the countries sending contingents are Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Germany will deploy fighter jets and also an A-400M transport aircraft, as reported by *The Hindu* earlier. The A-400M aircraft will be on showcase for the IAF, given that it is a contender for the open tender for medium transport aircraft.

U.S. event

The Red Flag exercise, hosted by the U.S. Air Force (USAF) from June 4 to 14, concluded at the Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. This was the second edition of Red Flag this year; the exercise is hosted four times a year by the USAF. Apart from the IAF, this edition saw the participation of the Singapore Air Force, the U.K.'s Royal Air Force, the Royal Netherlands Air Force, and the German Luftwaffe. The IAF deployed eight Rafale fighters, a first at Red Flag, supported by IL-78 mid-air refuellers for the transatlantic ferry, as well as C-17 Globemaster aircraft.

Canada and India are committed to working together on some 'important issues': Trudeau

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India and Canada agreed to "work together" to deal with some "very important issues", Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Saturday. Mr. Trudeau's statement comes after he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the G-7 Outreach Summit in Italy.

This is the first time the two have met since the Canadian Prime Minister went public with his allegations that Indian "government agents" planned the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen and Khalistani separatist wanted on terror charges in India.

U.S. NSA visit

On Monday, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan is expected to arrive in Delhi to discuss India-U.S. cooperation – in strategic, technological, and intelligence areas – with his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval. The NSAs will meet for the first time since the U.S. released details of a case allegedly involving Indian security officials in a plot to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, another Khalistani separatist wanted in India.

Shaky ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the sidelines of the G-7 Summit. PTI

The Modi-Trudeau meeting came just a few days before the one-year mark since Mr. Nijjar was shot dead outside a gurdwara at Surrey in Canada on June 18, which sent bilateral ties into a downward spiral. Neither Mr. Trudeau nor Mr. Modi referred directly to the investigation into the killing and the allegations by Canada, which the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has called "absurd" and "motivated".

"I'm not going to get into the details of this important, sensitive issue that we need to follow up, but this was a commitment to work together, in the coming times, to deal with some very important issues," Mr. Trudeau told mediapersons in Fasano, Italy on Saturday.

The MEA did not issue any statement on the exchange that took place just after the group photo for the G-7 Outreach leaders, and was captured in a single photo released on PM Modi's X account that simply said that he had "met" the Canadian Prime Minister.

Both the U.S. trial on the alleged Pannun plot and the Canadian trial on Nijjar's death are expected to begin in the next few months.

MEA stand

While the MEA announced a "high-level" inquiry into the U.S. allegations more than six months ago, it has consistently refused to accept the Canadian charges.

"To date, we have never received anything which is specific and worthy of being pursued by our investigative agencies, and I'm not aware anything has changed in the last few days, in that regard," External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said at an interaction in May this year, reacting to news that Canada had announced a fourth arrest of an Indian for Nijjar's killing.

He also drew a negative comparison between the U.S. and "another country in the same continent, [a] little bit to the north" (referring to Canada), on the issue of dealing with Khalistani groups. According to officials, India was informed of the arrests, but said that all four Indians arrested have not so far requested consular access.

In an email exchange, Canada's Foreign Ministry, called Global Affairs Canada, contested Mr. Jaishankar's contentions. "Since Canada became aware of the credible allegations, we have consistently provided all the information we can to India on the Nijjar case, through multiple channels," said spokesperson Charlotte MacLeod, in response to a number of questions from *The Hindu* that Global Affairs Canada did not answer.

Unlike the U.S. justice system, the Canadian system does not reveal evidence in the case prior to the trial in "public indictments".

Even so, several Canadian media reports indicate a consistent drip of information on leads that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canadian Department of Justice (DoJ) are following.

Governor meets victims of post-poll violence in West Bengal

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose met several Bharatiya Janata Party supporters who were allegedly victims of post-poll violence, at the Raj Bhavan on Sunday.

He said he would not meet Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee while people like them were prevented from meeting him.

Several BJP supporters who said that they were victims of post-poll violence were stopped from meeting the Governor on June 13 by the Kolkata Police who claimed that prohibitory orders under Section 144 had been imposed at the Raj Bhavan.

The BJP supporters were led by Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari. On Sunday, they were allowed inside the Raj Bhavan and they met the Governor.

HC order

Referring to the Calcutta High Court order in which Justice Kaushik Chanda had directed that those affected by post-poll violence can lodge their complaints by email, Mr. Adhikari said that so far 1,025 complaints have been sent to the Director-General of Police.

The Governor said that he would try to implement the Calcutta High Court order in letter and spirit.

Meanwhile, a four-member team of BJP MPs set up to take a stock of post-poll violence arrived in Kolkata on Sunday. The team is led by Biplab Kumar Deb and the members are Ravi Shankar Prasad, Brij Lal and Kavita Patidar.

The team is likely to visit the safe houses of the BJP in Kolkata and adjoining districts of the State and meet victims of the violence.

Shah holds high-level meet to assess security situation in J&K

Centre is committed to setting an example by cracking down on terrorists through 'innovative means', he says; the Union Minister directs all security agencies to work in 'mission mode' and ensure quick responses in a coordinated manner

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In the wake of several terror incidents in Jammu in the past one week, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday reviewed the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, and took stock of arrangements for the Amarnath Yatra, which commences on June 29.

Mr. Shah directed security agencies to replicate in the Jammu division the successes achieved in the Kashmir Valley with the "area domination plan" and "zero terror plan". He said the government was committed to setting an example by cracking down on terrorists through "innovative means". He directed all security agencies to work in "mission mode" and ensure quick responses in a coordinated manner, a statement issued by the Union Home Ministry said.

Security check: Union Home Minister Amit Shah at a meeting to review the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. PTI

Since June 9, there have been terror strikes at four places in Reasi, Kathua, and Doda in the Jammu division, in incidents where nine pilgrims and a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan were killed, and a civilian and at least seven security personnel were injured. Jammu has remained largely free of militant activities in the past two decades when compared with the Kashmir Valley. Since mid-2021, at least 26 major terror strikes have occurred in the Jammu region.

The Home Minister said that the fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir was in its "decisive phase". He added that recent incidents showed terrorism had been "forced to shrink from highly organised acts of terrorist violence to a mere proxy war". "We are determined to root it out as well," he said.

Mr. Shah emphasised seamless coordination among security agencies, identifying vulnerable areas, and addressing the security concerns of such areas.

He stated that government would leave no stone unturned in rooting out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Shah said that efforts of the Government of India had yielded positive results in the Kashmir Valley, with significant reduction in terror-related incidents. The improvement in the law and order situation was reflected in the record flow of tourists to the Kashmir Valley, the Ministry said. The Minister appreciated the security agencies and the J&K administration for the successful conduct of the Lok Sabha election, which witnessed a record voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir.

Reviewing preparations for the Amarnath Yatra, Mr. Shah instructed officials to establish perfect inter-agency coordination for effective security arrangements, including a well-established standard operating response mechanism. Besides adopting eco-friendly measures in the management of the yatra, he said it was the government's priority to ensure devotees did not face any difficulty.

Celebrating a river

Devotees gathering to take a dip in the Ganga on the occasion of Ganga Dasara at the Har Ki Pauri ghat in Haridwar on Sunday. PTI

Aazad Samaj Party to contest U.P. byelections

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Chandra Shekhar Aazad, Aazad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) chief and MP, said on Sunday that his party would contest the Assembly bypolls in Uttar Pradesh.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Aazad added that there was a political vacuum in representation of the marginalised/deprived sections.

The party was working to establish itself as the voice of such groups with the bypolls to 10 seats being the first step, he said.

INBRIEF

Nirmala to hold pre-Budget meet with industry chambers

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is likely to hold pre-Budget consultations with industry chambers on June 20, sources said. The Budget for 2024-25 is likely to be presented in Parliament in the second half of July. Industry sources said the pre-Budget consultation with Ms. Sitharaman would be preceded by a meet with Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra on June 18. The Budget is likely to lay out the Modi government's economic agenda. The Minister will have to look at measures to boost growth without high inflation and look for resources to meet the coalition government's compulsions. PTI

New criminal laws to become effective on July 1: Meghwal

Emphasising that the new criminal laws have been brought in after widespread consultation, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Sunday said that the new laws will come into force on July 1. The Minister made these remarks on the sidelines of a conference on 'India's Progressive Path in the Administration of Criminal Justice System' in Kolkata. The three new laws – the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, Bharatiya Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam – will replace the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Indian Evidence Act. Mr. Meghwal also expressed hope about the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the country.

Railway panel to ascertain why drivers violate speed curbs

The Railway Board has set up a committee to find out the reasons for the violation of speed restrictions by train drivers at various points between originating and destination stations, affecting safety. According to informed sources, the Railway Board acted after recent incidents in which two train drivers violated the speed restriction of 20 kmph on a river bridg under maintenance and drove their trains at a speed of 120 kmph. The Railways imposes speed restrictions for the safe operation of the trains for various reasons such as track condition, ongoing track repairs, old railway bridges and station yard remodelling. PTI

NDA allies to meet before Lok Sabha session to take a call on Speaker candidate

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

The announcement of the date for the election of a new Speaker for the Lok Sabha has set off speculation over who will occupy the post on June 26.

The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners are likely to meet on June 22 or 23 to decide its candidate.

While the Janata Dal(U) has said it would respect the BJP's claim on the post, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is speaking of a consensus "NDA candidate".

Sanjay Raut's overture

Matters have been complicated by Shiv Sena-Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, who said the Opposition Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc will support the TDP's choice if the party decided to field a candidate for the Speaker's election.

Mr. Raut said the Opposition's support would be forthcoming, apprehending alleged designs by the BJP to break the parties of its allies to shore up its own numbers.

"I hear the TDP wants to field its candidate. If that happens, INDIA bloc partners will discuss the issue and will try to ensure that all the INDIA alliance partners extend support to the TDP," he said.

Making a choice: The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will be held from June 24 to July 3. FILE PHOTO

He said the Opposition should get the Deputy Speaker's post in accordance with the rules. The Lok Sabha did not have a Deputy Speaker for the past five years.

Sources in the TDP told *The Hindu* that the BJP "had been consultative so far" and it expected this attitude to continue. TDP sources confirmed that the name of Daggubatti Purandareshwari was making the rounds, as was the name of Bhratruhari Mahtab, a multiple-term member earlier with the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and now with the BJP.

"We are yet to formally discuss it, though," the source said.

The JD(U) did not have any such misgivings. "The position of the Lok Sabha Speaker is the most dignified post of the House. The ruling party has the first right on the seat. The demands and statements of the INDIA bloc are objectionable. We believe that the BJP is the big party of the NDA. I have been in the NDA for 35 years. The BJP never tried to break any party. We will never try to weaken NDA," JD(U) spokesperson K.C. Tyagi said.

Going by the trend for continuity with Prime Minister Narendra Modi repeating nearly all the Ministers from his previous tenure, there is also talk that the incumbent Speaker, Om Birla, could be repeated. "Birla-*ji* became the first Speaker in two decades to be voted back into the Lok Sabha" a source in the government said.

The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will be held from June 24 to July 3.

Amid opposition, V-P inaugurates *Prerna Sthal* on Parliament premises

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday inaugurated *Prerna Sthal* on the Parliament House premises which accommodates statues of 15 freedom fighters and icons of Indian history relocated from various parts of the compound.

The Opposition had protested against the move.

Several Ministers were present at the inauguration. However, not a single MP from any Opposition party registered their presence.

Mr. Dhankhar said *Prerna Sthal* was "inspiring" in that statues of great national icons, including that of former Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, under whose mentorship his own political journey had begun, were in one place for anyone who visited Parliament.

Grand launch: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurating *Prerna Sthal* on the Parliament House premises on Sunday. ANI

Opposition leaders, however, said the shifting of the statues, especially those of Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar, earlier located at prominent places on the premises, will have an impact on the locations where leaders gathered to protest against the government.

Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress president and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, put out a statement explaining why his party opposed the move. Apart from pointing out that the decision had been taken unilaterally by the government, he said it was an attempt to tamper with the symbolism behind the location of the statues.

"The statue of Mahatma Gandhi in a meditative posture located right in front of old Parliament building held immense significance for India's democratic polity. It is at this place that Members often conducted peaceful and democratic protests, drawing strength from their presence," Mr. Kharge said.

Om Birla, Speaker of the 17th Lok Sabha, responded to the criticism.

"None of the statues have been removed; they have been relocated. There is no need to indulge in politics on this," he said.

"From time to time, I have been discussing these issues with different stakeholders. People were of the view that having these statues at one place will help disseminate information about their lives and achievements in a better way," Mr. Birla added.

Upbeat Cong. gears up for Haryana Assembly polls

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Upbeat after its performance in the Lok Sabha election in Haryana, the Congress has stepped up efforts to take on the BJP government in the State, where Assembly election is due later this year.

The Congress has kicked off a campaign to reach out to the people in the run-up to the polls.

On Sunday, the party launched a month-long, State-wide workers' conference. Through the campaign, party leaders and workers will talk to people about its poll guarantees. It will rake up issues such as unemployment, inflation, corruption, and "deteriorating law and order" in the State.

Starting the campaign in Karnal, Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda said the Lok Sabha results were encouraging and that the party was completely prepared for the Assembly polls.

Mr. Hooda asked the workers to implement a two-point action plan. "First, highlight the failures of the BJP government in 10 years. Second, the work of the previous Congress governments has to be taken to every house and the party's future guarantees have to be conveyed across the State."

PM to release Kisan Samman Nidhi fund

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Varanasi, his Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh, on Tuesday for the first time after taking oath for a third consecutive term.

He is expected to release the 17th instalment of the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, amounting to over ₹20,000 crore, for 92.6 million beneficiary farmers across the country.

Income support

The scheme, fully funded by the Union government, extends income support of ₹6,000 a year in three equal instalments to all land-holding farmer families, with a family defined as husband, wife, and minor children.

Earlier, on June 14, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath arrived in Varanasi to review preparations for Mr. Modi's visit. The venue for the programme is Mehndiganj, Sevapuri. Mr. Adityanath reviewed the Prime Minister's security, parking, public movement, and the routes planned.

During his visit, Mr. Modi will give away certificates to over 30,000 members of self-help groups trained as 'Krishi Sakhis' to work as para-extension workers, supporting fellow farmers in farm practices.

INBRIEF

Salman Khan house attack: new case registered, one held

The Mumbai Police have initiated a fresh case linked to the shooting incident outside Bollywood actor Salman Khan's house in April. One person has been arrested from Rajasthan on charges of criminal intimidation, Mumbai police said on Sunday. The accused Banwarilal Laturlal Gujar (25) was arrested from Bundi district. According to police, Mr. Gujar allegedly posted a video on his YouTube channel, claiming association with gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi, Goldy Brar, and other gang members. The video discussing the Bishnoi gang's plan to kill Mr. Khan was recorded on a highway in Rajasthan and later uploaded on his channel.

Boat capsizes in the Ganga in Patna, four persons missing

Four persons, including a woman, are missing after a boat capsized in the Ganga in Patna on Sunday morning. The boat was said to be carrying about 25 people. It overturned mid-stream in the river during the Ganga Dasara festival. Out of the 25 passengers, 17 were from a family belonging to a village in Nalanda district. Rescue efforts began soon after the incident, and 13 persons have been brought to the shore. On the directions of Patna District Magistrate Shrishat Kapil Ashok, 12 members of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and 30 of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) are involved in efforts to trace the missing persons. The incident took place at Umanghat in Barh, where a large number of people had gathered to bathe on the banks of the Ganga.

'NCERT changed Ayodhya lessons based on SC order'

Council Director Dinesh Saklani defends replaced content in Class 12 political science book saying they were done by experts; feels that textbooks should not create 'violent and depressed' citizens

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Three months after the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) dropped references of the Babri Masjid demolition and gave added emphasis to the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple movement in its Class 12 political science textbook, its Director, Dinesh Saklani, said on Sunday that changes were made by experts as the books did not want to create "violent and depressed" citizens.

Mr. Saklani said he was not directly involved in making the changes and the experts did what they deemed fit as per 'global practices', of screening for old text and revising it to new text. He said the Babri Masjid reference removal was in line with the Supreme Court verdict.

Different view: Latest Class 12 political science textbook refers to demolished Babri Masjid only as a 'three-domed structure'. AP

Three-domed structure

The latest edition of the textbook that was introduced after the changes were announced three months ago, does not refer to the Babri Masjid by its name and calls it a "three-domed structure".

"The experts took a call on what to call it or what not to call it," Mr. Saklani said.

He defended the change by saying that the NCERT book was a "small book", and if some student or anyone else was interested in researching the topic further they could "read about it from elsewhere". "We cannot stop people who are curious from reading and researching," he added.

In Chapter 8, "Recent developments in Indian politics", of the Class 12 political science textbook, the existing version on Page 136 reads – What is the legacy of the Ram Janambhoomi movement and the Ayodhya demolition for the nature of political mobilisation? This sentence in the revised textbooks will read – What is the legacy of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement?

The NCERT said the change was being made "to bring the initial questions in synchronisation with internal latest changes made in the chapter".

Central issue

On dropping reference to the Babri Masjid demolition in the same chapter, on Page 139, the existing version reads, "Fourth, a number of events culminated in the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya (known as Babri Masjid) in December 1992. This event symbolised and triggered various changes in the politics of the country and intensified debates about the nature of Indian nationalism and secularism. These developments are associated with the rise of the BJP and the politics of 'Hindutva'."

However, the changed version, the NCERT has stated, will read, "Fourth, the centuries-old legal and political dispute over the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya started influencing the politics of India, which gave birth to various political changes. The Ram Janmabhoomi Temple Movement, becoming the central issue, transformed the direction of the discourse on secularism and democracy. These changes culminated in the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya following the decision of the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court (which was announced on November 9, 2019)."

"The text on Ayodhya issue has been thoroughly revised because of the latest changes brought by the Supreme Court's Constitutional Bench verdict and its widespread welcoming reception," the NCERT had said in its rationale for revising content in textbooks earlier.

In another stark change, Class 11 political science textbook has dropped the reference of Muslims killed in post-Godhra riots.

Steps taken to stop escalation of violence in Jiribam: officials

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Jiribam will not be allowed to go the same way as the rest of Manipur, officials in the security establishment asserted as an uneasy calm prevailed in the western district after the violence over the past two weeks.

Outsiders from both the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities – who have been engaged in a conflict for more than a year – are entering Jiribam district in large numbers, which can potentially lead to a flare-up in the violence, according to officials on the ground. They said several measures have been taken to secure communities as well as stop outsiders.

"There is a clear directive that Jiribam will not be allowed to go the rest of Manipur way. No buffer zones will be allowed to be set up and any ethnic violence will not be allowed to happen," a highly placed official said. Attempts to snatch weapons have been prevented and security forces have been given permission to shoot if needed, though so far that has not been required, the official said.

Jiribam lies along the boundary with Assam and National Highway 37 passes through the district, making it critical to allow essential supplies through to the rest of the State. During the recent violence in Jiribam, a mob tried to storm a police station but was prevented by the Army and Assam Rifles, ensuring that no weapons were snatched, the official said.

An official in the security establishment said the Manipur government's decision to deploy State police commandos caused apprehensions among the people. The deployment, by air, was done despite objections from the Army and Assam Rifles. Some communication by the State government to the people will help in reassuring them, the official said.

As of now, units from the Assam Rifles have secured all sensitive areas in the district, the official said. However, there are isolated houses and it is neither possible to secure all of them nor is it possible to fully seal the district from all sides, the official added.

Security forces have increased their presence in the district, and are talking to people across all communities to prevent outsiders from coming in, one of the officials said.

Meitei radical armed outfit Arambai Tenggol and women's collective Meira Paibi are blocking their movements, the official added.

Centre to crack down on late-coming in offices

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

Taking a serious note of the laxity in implementing the Aadhaar-enabled biometric attendance system (AEBAS) and some employees coming late to work regularly, the Union government has urged Ministries, organisations and departments to regularly monitor the attendance reports of their employees.

Calling for disciplinary action against those habitually coming late to work or leaving early, the Centre said the data relating to punctuality and attendance of an employee should be taken into account while considering them for important assignments, trainings, deputations, and transfers or postings.

Sources in the Southern Railway say the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) on Saturday communicated to the Secretaries of Ministries and departments that despite clear instructions, several employees had not registered their attendance in the biometric attendance system and some of them were coming late to work regularly.

Lax implementation

After reviewing the functioning of the AEBAS and taking a serious note of the laxity in implementation of the system, the Centre reiterated that the officials should regularly monitor the attendance reports of their employees after downloading the same from the BAS portal.

Pointing out that the responsibility for ensuring punctuality in respect of the employees rested with the Ministry or department or organisation, the advisory said all employees should mark their attendance using the AEBAS without fail.

Many officials did not register their attendance in Biometric Attendance System. FILE PHOTO

In case any employee had not registered on the system, immediate steps should be taken to register their biometric data on the portal. For employees with disabilities, the authorities were told to make appropriate arrangements for providing convenient and easily accessible machines for capturing biometrics.

The heads of departments were told to sensitise their employees to adhere to the instructions relating to office hours, late attendance and so on. "They should download the consolidated report from the portal on a regular basis and identify the defaulters. Habitual late attendance and early leaving of office should be viewed seriously and be essentially discouraged. Strict action against the defaulters may be initiated under the extant Government of India rules."

Face authentication

The advisory also said the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) had rolled out face-based authentication applications using Android and Apple phones. The face authentication offered robust features such as faster authentication, live location detection and geo-tagging.

Nodal officers in the respective organisations were told to configure personal mobile policy in attendance portal for the employees and get the geo-coordinates fed into the entry locations of the office.

Citing earlier instructions, the DoPT said half-a-day's casual leave (CL) should be debited for each day of late attendance, but late attendance up to an hour on not more than two occasions in a month and for justifiable reasons may be condoned by the competent authority. "In addition to debiting CL (or Earned Leave, when no CL is available), disciplinary action may also be initiated against government servants coming to office habitually late as it amounts to 'misconduct' under the CCS(Conduct) Rules, 1964. Early leaving is also to be treated in the same manner as late coming," the DoPT said.

'Drugs in parcel' ploy being used to dupe people: Centre

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

CBIC has urged the public to report such cases on the govt. website or helpline number 1930

Stepping in to act against the rampant "narcotics drugs in parcel' extortion scam, the Revenue Department of the Union Finance Ministry on Sunday advised the public to stay vigilant, and stressed that Customs officials never contact individuals over phone or by email to remit Customs duties in private accounts.

"Various incidents have come to light through news portals/social media platforms of fraudulent persons posing as Indian Customs officers cheating the public of their hard-earned money across the country. These frauds are primarily done using digital means like phone calls or SMS, and are focused on extracting money through the purported fear of immediate penal action," the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said.

The CBIC has launched a multi-modal campaign to spread awareness of such fraudsters' *modus operandi* and urged people to immediately report such cases on www.cybercrime.gov.in or its helpline number 1930. Advising people to disconnect calls from people posing as courier staff or Customs officials, if there is any suspicion of fraud or irregularities, the CBIC also shared some of the common tricks deployed to carry out such scams. "Fraudsters posing as courier officials contact via calls, text messages or emails claiming that Customs have held a package or parcel and requires payment of Customs duties or taxes before it can be released," a CBIC statement said.

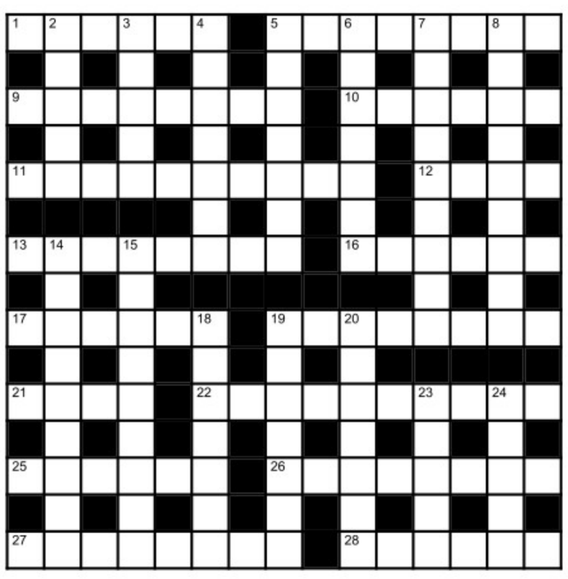
As a pressure tactic, fraudsters impersonate Customs/Police/CBI officials and demand payment of Customs duty/clearance fees for packages/gifts that purportedly have been received from a foreign country and require Customs clearance," it added. The targeted individuals are asked to make payments for release of their goods, or informed that their package has been seized due to illegal content such as drugs,or violations of Customs regulations.

TH CROSSWORD + 14203

(set by Pixie Dust)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Jumped when Superintendent of Police called (6)
5 In disguise, Ram went with a boater (8)
9 Neutral peacemaker's stationed around capital of Indonesia (8)
10 Suggestion from religious woman involving a church (6)
11 These are marks of significant pause after processing income loss (10)
12 Some crazy or exciting time long past (4)
13 Small fish and fruit (8)
16 In a graceful manner Bill has a try capturing focus of visitor (6)
17 My ailment discussed in an oppressive atmosphere (6)
19 How Neo could be a Star Wars spin-off? (5,3)
21 In Jerusalem, old man going to and fro (4)
22 Unable to slip away and marry say, one from the Melon family? (10)
25 Kudos! You finally designed puzzle (6)
26 Control large numbers crossing Atlantic basically to reach Edinburgh on 31st December, say (8)
27 One with a strong desire starts to tantalise husband in rather sexy, totally enchanting robe (8)
28 Force told to stand by (6)

Down

2 Queen Nephthys sampling rounded kind of pasta (5)
3 Criminal ability to waste time and last bit of money for a cover story (5)
4 Go out playing, welcoming beginnings of spring! Supremely enjoyable! (7)
5 The Reverend guided tramp to union! (7)
6 Country's embroiled in a suit (7)
7 Dreamy ad about lingeries, essentially bought off the shelf (5-4)
8 Grant gets one working instrument (9)
14 Bihar's unusual urgency to find something keeping locks in place? (9)
15 Four divas freaking out? Shame! (9)
18 Description of a cold judge (7)
19 Cowboy took flight with revolutionary leader at last (7)
20 Girl abandoned goals to work in city (7)
23 West Asian citizen seen in Romania (5)
24 Appropriate way to cook (5)

SUDOKU

4							2	3
1		6						
	2		4	1		7	5	
	9				7			
		1				4		
			1				9	
	7	3		5	4		1	
						5		7
6	8							2

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

	J		R		C		A		L	
F	O	R	E	S	H	I	P		A	P
	V		N		E		E		U	
S	I	S	T	R	A		D	I	G	E
	A		A		T				H	
C	L	I	M	A	T	I	C		I	N
			O		H		U		N	
F	L	I	B	B	E	R	T	I	G	I
	A				G		I		J	
F	U	L	C	R	A		E	R	A	S
	N		H		L				C	
S	C	R	A	W	L	E	D		K	R
	H		R		O		R		A	
M	E	A	D	O	W		I	N	S	E
	S		S		S		P		S	

L		L		M						
A	P	E	X	E	S					
	U		A		D					
	E	S	T	I	F					
H		E		O						
I	N	D	I	C	T					
N				R						
I	G	I	B	B	E	T				
J		O								
E	R	A	S	U	R	E	S			
C		D		L						
K	R	O	N	E	R					
A		I		V						
I	N	S	E	R	I	E	S			
S		S		N						

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	7	5	3	1	2	6	4	9
6	2	1	5	9	4	8	3	7
3	4	9	7	8	6	2	1	5
1	6	8	4	3	5	9	7	2
4	9	7	2	6	1	3	5	8
5	3	2	9	7	8	4	6	1
7	5	4	6	2	9	1	8	3
9	1	6	8	5	3	7	2	4
2	8	3	1	4	7	5	9	6

FAITH

Id, a test of faith

Id-ul-Azha known as Bakri Id, Id Qurban or Qurban Bayarami is a Muslim festival which commemorates the spirit of sacrifice, said Professor Kumool Abbi. Id falls on the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and the tenth day of *Dhu-al Hijjah* and on the last day of Haj.

The festival commemorates the sacrifice by Prophet Ibrahim of his son Ismail to Allah. As the legend goes, The Almighty appeared in the dream of Ibrahim commanding him to pass the test of faith by sacrificing his son. Satan attempted to thwart him but Ismail threw stones and ousted him away. As Ibrahim was about to accomplish the sacrifice, Allah revealed himself and gave him a lamb to sacrifice instead.

This festival constitutes a number of rituals and devotional practices and all these relate to accepting the will of God with forbearance, the spirit of sacrifice and compassion to all. The practice of *Udhiyah* takes place where Muslims across the world sacrifice some kind of livestock. The meat from the animal sacrificed is divided into three parts, one for family, one for relatives and friends, and one for the needy. Above all, Id re-emphasises the solidarity of the community. Muslims across the world observe this festival, which highlights the necessity and virtues of compassion.

IRDAI improves health cover experience

COVERNOTE

Siddharth Singhal

The insurance landscape in India has seen a major transformation over the last few years, thanks to the consistent efforts of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) which has been efficiently aided by insurers turning it into a concerted effort by all stakeholders. In another landmark move, the regulator came out with a master circular with several consumer-centric reforms in health insurance.

The latest reform is no claim can be rejected due to the lack of documents. To simplify claim process, IRDAI mandated the necessary documents be sought by the insurer at the time of underwriting. Besides, the customers of general insurers are allowed to cancel policy anytime and be refunded for the unexpired policy period, while insurers can only cancel the policy on the grounds of fraud.

Hassle-free claims

The IRDAI had earlier directed while cashless claim must be cleared within a three-hour limit, the decision on cashless authorisation by the insurer has to be made within one hour of the claim request. The Master Circular, which shall be reviewed every year, also lists a number of other initiatives taken by the regulator recently.

The IRDAI circular also mandated all insurers should strive to achieve 100% cashless claim settlement in a time-bound manner and ensure claim settlement through reimbursement mode is done only in exceptional circumstances. It added the ratio of reimbursement claims should be kept to the bare minimum. This directive is in line with IRDAI's recent 'Cashless Anywhere' directive which asked insurers to settle claims in cashless mode even in those hospitals not in their list of network hospitals.

The IRDAI has asked insurers to immediately put in place necessary systems and procedures, by July 31. It said if required, the insurers could put in place dedicated help desks at hospitals to deal with cashless claim requests within stipulated time-frame. Moreover, they should provide digital pre-authorisation to policyholders to facilitate the claims. To address this, the IRDAI said in case the claim is not settled in three hours, any additional costs charged by the hospital would be borne by the insurer from shareholder's fund.

Impact on sector

The only way this directive can be implemented is through better coordination between insurers and hospitals. Not only operational processes would have to be improved, haring of medical records between different stakeholders would have to be more streamlined to help insurer to take a decision on the claim.

Medical record digitisation is already happening via the National Health Claims Exchange, which is facilitating a more transparent and smooth exchange of information.

Standalone efforts won't be able to achieve this. It requires a concerted effort on the part of the entire healthcare ecosystem.

The good news is insurers have been showing positive intent to support the regulator in all its efforts to improve the insurance experience for customers. And, hospitals would surely get on board considering it would ensure faster payouts for them too. Timely settlement will eliminate most glitches and go a long way to better healthcare experience of patients and caregivers.

The IRDAI added if policyholder dies during treatment, the insurer must immediately process the request for claim settlement and get the mortal remains released from the hospital immediately. This will surely offer the grieving family some semblance as they deal with a tragic loss. The norms are consumer-centric and prioritise policyholders' welfare above everything else.

This commendable move is poised to revolutionise the health insurance landscape, ensuring timely and hassle-free claim settlements, enhancing customer satisfaction, and providing inclusive and affordable health insurance solutions for all.

(The writer is Business Head, Health Insurance, Policybazaar.com)

Safety first: Keeping exposure to derivatives limited to a small percentage of portfolio. can help manage risk. REUTERS

Why equity derivatives are not for the uninitiated

Derivatives market is primarily a means of hedging; if you are participating in the derivatives market only, then you are indulging in short-term speculation and not being a long-term investor

UNKNOWN TERRITORY

Joydeep Sen

> The average daily turnover (ADT) in equity derivatives, rose from ₹1.62 lakh crore in May 2023 to ₹2.54 lakh crore in April 2024

> In May 2023, the share of individual investors in equity derivatives turnover at NSE was 26.8% of total; in April 2024, it was 25.5%

In May 2023, SEBI came out with a circular that should have alerted individual traders in equity derivatives. It said four things: (a) 9 out of 10 individual traders in equity Futures and Options segment incurred net losses (b) On an average, loss makers registered net trading loss close to ₹50,000 (c) loss makers expended an additional 28% of net trading losses as transaction costs and (d) Those making net trading profit, incurred between 15-50% of such profit as transaction cost.

It was also mentioned, "Upon login into their trading accounts with brokers, the clients may be prompted to read the risk disclosures and shall be allowed to proceed ahead only after acknowledging the same" and "the risk disclosures shall be displayed prominently, covering at least 50% of the screen".

More than a year since, it is time to take stock. Our source of data is NSE Market Pulse. In May 2023, average daily turnover (ADT) in equity derivatives, including stock futures, stock options, index futures and index options, was ₹1.62 lakh crore. In April 2024, the ADT was ₹2.54 lakh crore.

Here are the details. In May 2023, the share of individual investors in equity derivatives turnover at NSE was 26.8% of total. In April 2024, it was 25.5%.

A similar percentage on a higher traded volume means individuals are participating more in equity derivatives. Number of individual investors participating in NSE Futures & Options rose from about 10 lakh in 2018-19 to about 96 lakh in 2023-24.

'Did not pay heed'

When we juxtapose the message from SEBI and this data, we may conclude in spite of the alert, individual derivative traders have not paid heed. You would be wondering what the issue with that is.

The biggest participant in equity derivatives segment is 'prop' which means proprietary book or trading with own funds. In April 2024, 'prop' share of equity derivatives was 58.5% of total. These are typically brokerages or NBFCs with own funds to play this market. Some of the 'prop books' would be individual brokers, who have not become as big as to corporatise and are running as a one-man show. These individuals are professionals in the equity market, they know what they are doing. If you are a first-time participant, you may not have as much awareness as someone doing it for, say, 20 years. If you are lured by the thrill of it, you run not only the usual market risks but an additional risk, emanating from lack of awareness. That is, your risk is higher.

There is another aspect. There are courses run by influencers or 'finfluencers'. These are short courses with a nominal fee, say ₹10,000 and advertised on social media, with the lure after the course, you will become an expert in equity derivatives and can earn crores of rupees.

Greed, fear

Markets run on greed and fear. The influencers play on your greed, that you will be able to earn in crores. The joke going around in market circles is those who make losses in equity derivatives trading, run these courses to make money. If one is a successful derivative trader and is earning crores for himself / herself, would not have the time or inclination to run courses. They make money from these courses by dint of volume i.e. a large number of 'students', in spite of low fees. And large number of 'students' flock to it, driven by greed.

To be noted, (a) these courses are not approved by Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) or any other competent authority and (b) the people running these do not have any license or permission from SEBI or any other competent authority. The bigger aspect to note is you get 20 years of experience in trading equity derivatives by being there for 20 years, and not by doing a two-week course.

Let's come to the fundamental aspect. Why would you, as an individual who is not an investment professional, want to invest in equity derivatives? Your objective is, or should be, creation of wealth over the long term. That you can do by purchasing equity stocks or through managed portfolios (mutual funds, PMS, AIF) and remaining invested for long.

The purpose of the equity derivatives market is primarily as a means of hedging where you continue with stocks portfolio but take short-term contra views or positions by paying a margin. If you are participating in the derivatives market only, then you are indulging in short term speculation and not being a long-term investor.

Conclusion

There are known and unknown risks. When a trapeze artiste is doing his / her stuff, s/he knows the risks involved and has been doing it for say 10 years. If you try doing that for the thrill of it by taking one-month training, you are taking unknown risks. One approach could be keep exposure to derivatives limited to a small percentage of portfolio. You should not increase the exposure, for years. Then you would learn the ropes.

(The writer is a corporate trainer (financial markets) and author)

Creating an emergency reserve

THINKINVESTOR

Think of contingency reserve, including the cash at home as self-insurance to protect family's well-being during crisis; that may help in you appreciating the need for creating such a fund

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Contingency reserve is set up to meet expenses during uncertain times and unexpected expenses during normal times. Previously, we discussed where to park contingency reserve. To recap, it is preferable to keep contingency reserve in investments that are liquid with no downside risk. That means investing in interest-bearing instruments. Also, it is best if you can protect the inflation-adjusted value of contingency reserve. If not, you must strive to protect at least the nominal value of the reserve. Here, we discuss why credit cards cannot always act as contingency reserve and why having some cash at home is optimal.

Natural factors

Like many, you probably use electronic money – UPI payments and credit cards – to meet expenses. Some argue credit cards can act as contingency reserve. But what if your credit limit is full or not enough to meet a contingency payment because you use them for lifestyle expenses? If you have multiple credit cards, you may argue about keeping one credit card exclusively for meeting such expenses. But such expenses are not frequent. So, if you do not use credit card often, chances are the credit card issuing company may reduce credit limit on that card. Maintaining a separate contingency reserve is optimal to meet unexpected expenses, especially if income stream is volatile.

This brings us to the next argument. In modern world where electronic money is preferred, why maintain some cash at home? The answer depends on where you live. Is your city prone to natural disasters such as flash floods and tsunami? If so, keeping some cash at home may help. The reason is simple. When natural calamities happen (uncertain times), expect the electricity, Internet service and phone connections to be down for a while. How then would you pay for essentials, including food?

Conclusion

For many, the feeling money does not earn optimal returns is the primary issue associated with maintaining a contingency reserve. This is called saliency bias. You focus on idle money at home or the contingency reserve in your savings account, compared with, say, the loss-making stocks you hold in your trading account for a long time. Instead, think of contingency reserve including the cash at home as a self-insurance to protect your family's well-being during crisis. That may help in you appreciating the need for such a fund.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	10.50 onwards	10,747 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to Rs 4,999
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5.5%
State Bank of India	11.15-15.30	10,909-11,974	2,182-2,395	1.50%(Min Rs 1,000 to Max Rs 15,000)
ICICI Bank	10.80 onwards	10,821 onwards	2,164 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda	11.10-18.75	10,896-12,902	2,179-2,580	Up to 2% (Min Rs 1,000, Max Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%
Bank of India	10.85-14.85	10,834-11,856	2,167-2,371	0.50%-1% (Min Rs 250, Max Rs 10,000)
Canara Bank	10.95-16.40	10,859-12,266	2,172-2,453	0.50% (Max Rs 2,500)
Punjab National Bank	10.40-17.95	10,772-12,683	2,144-2,537	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.99-15.00	10,621-11,895	2,124-2,379	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.49 onwards	10,994 onwards	2,199 onwards	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	11.35-15.45	10,959-12,013	2,192-2,403	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 7,500)
Punjab & Sind Bank	10.75-13.50	10,809-11,505	2,162-2,301	0.50%-1%
South Indian Bank	12.85-20.60	11,338-13,414	2,268-2,683	Up to 2%
UCO Bank	12.45-12.85	11,236-11,338	2,247-2,268	Up to 1% (Min Rs 750)
IDFC First Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Maharashtra	10.00-12.80	10,624-11,325	2,125-2,265	1% (Rs 1,000-Rs 10,000)
Karnataka Bank	13.43	11,487	2,297	Up to 2% of loan amount (Min. Rs 2,500, Max. Rs 8,500)
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	1.5% -3.5%

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	8.70 - 10.45	10,307 - 10,735	Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	8.75 - 10.60	10,319 - 10,772	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	8.90 - 12.70	10,355 - 11,300	Up to Rs 2,000
Canara Bank	8.70 - 12.70	10,307 - 11,300	0.25% (Maximum Rs 2,500)
Bank of India	8.85 - 10.85	10,343 - 10,834	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 5,000)
UCO Bank	8.45 - 10.55	10,246 - 10,759	Nil
State Bank of India	8.75 - 9.80	10,319 - 10,554	Up to Rs 1,500
IDBI Bank	8.80 - 9.60	10,331 - 10,525	Rs 2,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	8.70 - 13.00	10,307 - 11,377	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Overseas Bank**	8.85 - 12.00	10,343 - 11,122	0.50% (Rs 500 - Rs 5,000)
ICICI Bank	9.10 onwards	10,403 onwards	Up to 2%
HDFC Bank	9.20 onwards	10,428 onwards	0.50% (Rs 3,500 - Rs 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	8.88 - 11.37	10,350 - 10,964	0.60% (Rs 3,000 - Rs 11,000)
Federal Bank	8.85 onwards	10,343 onwards	Rs 2,000 - Rs 4,500
South Indian Bank	8.75 onwards	10,319 onwards	0.75% (Max: Rs 10,000)
IDFC First Bank	9.75 onwards	10,562 onwards	Up to Rs 10,000
City Union Bank	14.45 - 14.95	11,751 - 11,882	1.25% (Min: Rs 1,000)

*0.25% interest rate concession for existing housing loan borrowers and corporate salary account holders.
**0.50% interest rate concession to borrowers with credit scores of 800 and above. Interest rate concession of 0.25% to borrowers having credit scores of 750-799.

Rates and charges as on June 12 **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

MOSCOW

Russia claims capture of village in southern Ukraine, says Ministry

REUTERS

Russia on Sunday claimed its troops had captured a village in southern Ukraine, continuing its progress on the front line against a Ukrainian Army lacking troops and ammunition. "Units of the Eastern forces have liberated the settlement of Zagrine in the Zaporizhzhia region," the Russian Defence Ministry said. AFP

MOSCOW

Russian special forces kill IS-linked hostage takers at detention centre

AP

Russian special forces freed two prison guards and shot dead six inmates linked to the Islamic State militant group who had taken them hostage at a detention centre in the southern city of Rostov on Sunday, Russian media said. According to media, the hostage takers were from Russia's southern republic of Ingushetia. REUTERS

KAOHSIUNG

Taiwan President says China's 'strong rise' is greatest challenge

REUTERS

President Lai Ching-te warned cadets of Taiwan's military academy on Sunday that their biggest challenge was "the strong rise of China", which he said regards the "elimination" of the self-ruled island as a national cause. Chinese leaders have escalated their rhetoric recently to suggest "unification" is an "inevitability". AFP

JOHANNESBURG

Ex-leader Zuma's party to join Opposition in S. Africa's Parliament

REUTERS

South Africa's uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) party will join an alliance of smaller Opposition parties in Parliament in a bid to take on the African National Congress and Democratic Alliance-led coalition government, it said on Sunday. The MK party will join the alliance called the "Progressive Caucus", its spoeksperson said. REUTERS

Ukraine peace summit ends with hope

Participants stress the need to get Russia to the talks table; President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hails the diplomatic 'success' of the event, adding that the path is open for a second peace summit; many leaders are also worried about Beijing aligning with Moscow and staying out of the Swiss conference

Smita Sharma
BURGENSTOCK

The two-day Summit on Peace in Ukraine at the Bürgenstock resort in Switzerland ended on Sunday with participants hoping for an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine. Eighty countries and four organisations of the 100 attending delegations supported the final joint communiqué that emerged out of the Path To Peace Summit looking at ways to end the Russia-Ukraine war raging on since February 2022.

"The ongoing war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine continues to cause large-scale human suffering and destruction, and to create risks and crises with global repercussions," said the declaration that focused on the three agendas of nuclear safety, global food security and humanitarian issues.

"All prisoners of war must be released by complete exchange. All deported and unlawfully displaced Ukrainian children, and all other Ukrainian civilians who were unlawfully detained, must be returned to Ukraine," the declaration emphasised.

'Diplomatic success'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the diplomatic "success" of the event, and said the path was open for a second peace summit, with a view to ending the war with a just and lasting settlement.

But he told a closing press conference that "Russia and their leadership are not ready for a just peace".

Swiss President Viola Amherd claimed that the communique is "a strong signal from the international community for peace based on international law and the UN Charter".

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, along with other world leaders, at the summit in Burgenstock on Sunday. AFP

In their deliberations during the opening ceremony and plenary sessions, most of the Western bloc leaders struck a similar note in underlining that Ukraine was the victim here, and peace cannot mean surrender, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin's latest conditions to begin negotiations for peace.

Russia's absence

The elephant in the room though remained Russia's absence with Mr. Putin not invited by host Switzerland, leading to questions about the effectiveness of the Path to Peace Summit. It is important to note that Switzerland, unlike China, India or the United States, is also a signatory to the Rome Statute and upholds decisions of the International Criminal Court in the Hague, which has indicted Mr. Putin for alleged war crimes.

Mr. Putin's presence on Swiss soil could have paved the path for his arrest. But the conference did recognise the need to get Moscow to the dialogue table to end the war.

China's stance

A day earlier, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in his opening remarks, had insisted that the Summit could have been more result-oriented if the other party to the conflict - Russia - had been there in the room as he offered Turkiye's willingness to facilitate the process of mediation talks.

Many leaders are also worried about China aligning with Russia and staying out of the Swiss summit instead of pulling its leverage on Kremlin to end the conflict. President Alexander Stubb of Finland, in an interview with the *Finnish Broadcasting Company*, made it amply clear.

Meanwhile speaking to *The Hindu*, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer hoped that the Summit for peace would find new friends and partners in the future, including India. He welcomed India's diplomatic participation in the Burgenstock Summit as a beginning and important first step.

(With Agence France-Presse inputs)

Smita Sharma is an independent journalist based in Delhi.

Daily Gaza 'pause' for aid deliveries: Israel

Agence France-Presse
GAZA STRIP

Israel's military said on Sunday it would "pause" fighting around a south Gaza route daily to facilitate aid deliveries, following months of warnings of famine in the besieged Palestinian territory.

The announcement of a "local, tactical pause of military activity" during daylight hours in an area of Rafah came a day after eight Israeli soldiers were killed in a blast near the far-southern city and three more troops died elsewhere, in one of the heaviest losses for the Army in its war against Hamas militants.

UN agencies and aid groups have repeatedly sounded the alarm of dire shortages of food and other essentials in the Gaza Strip, exacerbated by overland access restrictions and the closure of the key Rafah crossing with Egypt.

Israel has long defended its efforts to let aid into Gaza including via its Kerem Shalom border near Rafah, blaming militants for looting supplies and humanitarian workers for failing to distribute them to civilians.

"A local, tactical pause of military activity for humanitarian purposes will take place from 8.00 a.m. until 7.00 p.m. every day until further notice along the road that leads from the Kerem Shalom crossing to the Salah al-Din road and then northwards," a military statement said.

A map released by the Army showed the declared humanitarian route extending until Rafah's European Hospital, about 10 km from Kerem Shalom.

The U.S. on Friday imposed sanctions on an extremist Israeli group for blocking and attacking Gaza-bound aid convoys.

Feasibility study on land connectivity with India in final stages, says Wickremesinghe

Press Trust of India
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Sunday that the feasibility study on a proposal to establish land connectivity with India is in its final stages.

Mr. Wickremesinghe, who was travelling in the northeastern district of Mannar to inspect the development work in the region, said that the preliminary work of the feasibility study was over and the final phase would be completed soon.

Ranil Wickremesinghe

This proposal and the prospect of a power grid connection between the two nations are likely to be discussed during the visit of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to Lanka this week.

Mr. Wickremesinghe said a commercial venture to sell the excess renewable energy to India would also be discussed during the Minister's visit.

On Saturday, the Lankan Foreign Ministry here announced that Mr. Jaishankar would arrive in Colombo on June 20.

However, there was no official announcement on Mr. Jaishankar's visit from India's Ministry of External Affairs.

If confirmed, this could be Mr. Jaishankar's first official standalone visit abroad after he was appointed India's External Affairs Minister in the new government early this month.

Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda has been quoted as saying in the local media that Sri Lanka would raise the contentious issue of illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters by Indian fishermen.

At least 19 Haj pilgrims dead in Saudi Arabia as extreme heatwave continues

Agence France-Presse
AMMAN

At least 19 Jordanian and Iranian pilgrims have died while on the Haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, authorities from their countries said on Sunday, as temperatures soar in the kingdom.

"Fourteen Jordanian pilgrims died and 17 others were missing" during the performance of Haj rituals, Jordan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The Ministry later confirmed the 14 had died "after suffering sun stroke due to the extreme heatwave".

Many of the rituals are performed outdoors and on foot, creating challenges

Iranian Red Crescent chief Pirhossein Koolivand separately said "five Iranian pilgrims have lost their lives so far in Mecca and Medina during the Haj this year", without saying how they died.

The Haj, one of the world's biggest religious gatherings, is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must perform it at least once.

Temperatures have pushed well past 40 degrees Celsius during the annual pilgrimage that around 1.8 million Muslims are taking part in this year.

Many of the rituals are performed outdoors and on foot, creating challenges especially among the elderly.

Saudi Arabia has not provided any information on fatalities.

But the kingdom has implemented heat mitigation measures, including climate-controlled areas. It distributes water, and offers advice to pilgrims on protecting themselves from the sun.

During last year's Haj at least 240 people – many from Indonesia – died, according to figures announced by various countries which also did not specify causes of death.

Sport

Sarthak, Rakshitha, Basim, and Kaushik complete the double

MOTORSPORTS

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Sarthak Chavan (Pro-Stock 301-400cc Open), Rakshitha Dave (Girls, Stock 165cc), Abdul Basim (Novice, Stock 165cc), and Kaushik Subbiah Ganesan (Novice, Stock 301-400cc) completed a double as the first round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Motorcyling Championship concluded on Sunday.

The 17-year-old Sarthak established himself as the top gun in the premier Pro-Stock 301-400cc Open class, winning both races over the weekend in an emphatic manner. The 15-year-old Rakshitha completed a fine double with a sweeping win in Race-2.

Podium trio: Jagan, winner of Pro-Stock 165cc Open race, flanked by Ahamad, left, and Deepak . SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Similarly, Chennai teenager Basim achieved a clean sweep by winning with as much ease as in the first race. Later, Kaushik also notched a double with another fine ride starting from pole position.

The results (Provisional, all six laps unless mentioned):
National Championship: Pro-Stock 301-400cc Open (Race-2): 1. Sarthak Chavan (TVS Racing) 11mins, 16.788secs); 2. Chiranth Vishwanath (TVS Racing) (11:17.567); 3. A. Alwyn Sundar (Gusto Racing) (11:27.870).

Pro-Stock 165cc Open (Race-2): 1. Jagan Kumar (TVS Racing) (12:10.176); 2. K.Y. Ahamad (TVS Racing) (12:18.302); 3. Deepak Ravikumar (TVS Racing) (12:18.611).

Novice (Stock 165cc) Race-2: 1. R.S. Abdul Basim (Rockers Racing) (13:02.075); 2. Kamal Navas (One Racing) (13:08.162); 3. G. Abhinav (Chandra LGE Racing team) (13:08.772).

Girls (Stock 165cc) Race-2 (5 laps): 1. Rakshitha S Dave (RACR Castrol Power 1 Ultimate) (10:58.378); 2. Ryhana Bee (Motul Sparks Racing) (11:01.284); 3. Jagathishree Kumaresan (One Racing) (11:02.400).

Novice (Stock 301-400cc) Race-2: 1. Kaushik Subbiah Ganesan (RACR Castrol Power 1 Ultimate) (12:21.760); 2. Aldrin Babu (RACR Castrol Power 1 Ultimate) (12:28.689); 3. Varun Patil (Pvt.) (12:29.355).

Idemitsu Honda India Talent Cup: NSF 250 R (Race-2) (3 laps): 1. Shyam Sundar (05:46.716); 2. Mohsin Paramban (05:47.106); 3. Rakshit S Dave (05: 47.806).

TVS One-Make Championship — Open (Apache RR 310): 1. C. Senthilkumar (11:52.043); 2. Manoj Yesuadian (11:55.840); 3. P. Jayanth (11:58.264).

Rookie (Apache RTR 200) Race 2: 1. Harshit V Bogar (13:26.291); 2. C.S. Kedarnadh (13:26.499); 3. K.M. Saranjith (13:41.518).

TVS Electric RTE (4 laps): 1. Sarthak Chavan (07:26.459); 2. Chiranth Vishwanath (07:28377); 3. A. Alwyn Sundar (07:34.190).

Media (Apache RTR 200) (5 laps): 1. Karan Mathur (Auto X) (11:31.475); 2. Praveen Kumar (Rev Nitro) (11:31.869); 3. Akash Bhadra (Topgear) (11:34.008).

Nagal finishes runner-up in the Perugia Challenger

TENNIS

Sports Bureau

Top seed Luciano Darderi of Italy eased past Sumit Nagal 6-1, 6-2 to win the €148,625 Challenger tennis tournament in Perugia, Italy, on Sunday. The Indian had beaten Spain's Bernabe Miralles 7-6(2), 1-6, 6-2 in the semifinals.

Other results (finals): $15,000 ITF men, Hong Kong: Tomohiro Masabayashi (Jpn) & Thntub Suksumrarn (Tha) bt Ajeet Rai (Nzl) & Rishi Reddy 6-3, 7-5.

$15,000 ITF women, Santo Domingo: Raphaelle Lacasse (Can) & Ana Zamburek (Dom) bt Sharmada Balu & Riya Bhatia 6-3, 6-4.

Neeru sets new National mark in girls' u-18 400m

ATHLETICS

Sports Bureau

Neeru Pathak broke the year-old girls 400m under-18 National record of former Asian junior champion Rezoana Heena while winning the gold at the 19th National youth athletics championships in Bilaspur on Sunday.

The 17-year-old from Delhi clocked 52.85s (old: 52.98s) and also qualified for the under-20 Worlds (entry standard 55.40s) which will be held in Lima, Peru, in August.

Odisha's Bapi Hansda, who had missed the recent under-20 Asians in Dubai, bettered the boys' 400m meet record clocking 47.12s (old record 47.58) and also made the cut for the under-20 Worlds. Rajasthan's Muskan broke the girls 1000m National record (2:51.11s, OR 2:58.40).

Record-breaking walk

Khushu Yadav, also from the same State, rewrote the five-year-old National record in girls 3000m race walk (13:35.58s, OR 14:14.83).

In the boys 1000m, all the 11 who ran the race bettered the 14-year-old meet record with Delhi's Mohammed Nooruddin taking the gold in 2:28.89s (old meet record 2:34.21).

Jharkhand's Parth Singh (100m 10.68s meet record, old 10.74) and Tamil Nadu's Abinaya Rajarajan (12.09s) emerged as the fastest boy and girl respectively.

INTO THE SUPER 8

England downs Namibia in a rain-curtailed encounter

GETTY IMAGES

England defeated Namibia by 41 runs (DLS method) in a rain-interrupted Group-B match in Antigua.
The scores: England 122/5 in 10 overs (Bairstow 31, Brook 47 n.o., Trumpelmann 2/31) bt Namibia 84/3 in 10 overs (van Lingen 33, Wiese 27); **Toss:** Namibia; **PoM:** Brook.

DECISIVE BLOW

Stoinis and Head in fine form as Australia knocks out Scotland

AFP

Australia beat Scotland by five wickets, a result that pushed the latter out of contention for a Super 8 berth from Group B.
The scores: Scotland 180/5 in 20 overs (Munsey 35, McMullen 60, Berrington 42 n.o., Maxwell 2/44) lost to Australia 186/5 in 19.4 overs (Head 68, Stoinis 59, Watt 2/34, Sharif 2/42); **Toss:** Aus; **PoM:** Stoinis.

BIDDING ADIEU

Wiese announces retirement from international cricket

GETTY IMAGES

Namibia all-rounder David Wiese announced his retirement from international cricket. "In terms of international cricket, I don't know if there's much left in me. I've had a lot of good times with Namibia and to play my last game for them possibly at a World Cup against a world-class team like England, it just seemed like the right time."

HIGH PRAISE

It's brilliant to see Asha's journey, says teammate Smriti

K. MURALI KUMAR

Smriti Mandhana heaped praise on Asha Sobhana after the spinner's terrific four-for against SA. "The kind of experience she has, I don't know what nerves will be there. It's brilliant to see her journey. I am happy that she was in my team," Smriti said after helping script India's second-biggest ODI win at home [by runs].

India takes flight to the Caribbean after a stellar show in the Land of Opportunity

A game against Canada would've been ideal for the side to get some match practice; Kohli's form will be crucial in the Super 8 stage

T20 WORLD CUP

Ashwin Achal
LAUDERHILL

India did exceptionally well to successfully navigate a tricky Group-A campaign in the United States of America.

The opener against Ireland went along expected lines. The big one against Pakistan saw India use clever tact – promoting Axar Patel up the order, bringing Jasprit Bumrah back into the attack when Pakistan started to get comfortable – to negate the disadvantage of batting first on a dicey New York pitch.

Rohit Sharma's men had to dig their heels in to overcome a gritty USA. A wash out in the last match here, however, left the side unhappy.

Rallying his troops: Rohit knows that India's real test lies ahead. K.R. DEEPAK

Unfit outfield

The Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium here should have witnessed at least a shortened game between India and Canada on Saturday. The sun was out, rain stayed away, and yet the outfield was unfit for play.

India was denied match practice which could have been useful ahead of the Super 8 stage in the West Indies. For Virat Kohli – who has made only five runs in three outings – a good knock against Canada would have given a sense of relief and confidence.

India batting coach Vikram Rathour expressed his disappointment at not getting play.

"We were really looking forward to playing a game here, especially as we were expecting better batting conditions than what we got in New York. It was important for us to get a game, but this is something that we cannot control," Rathour said.

The ground was not fully covered when it rained – a lapse which led to the wet outfield. Asked if this was acceptable practice at a World Cup, Rathour said: "This question should be asked to the ICC. I won't be able to answer.

"I don't know the reason why it was not covered, and why they didn't have enough covers for the whole ground. If they would have covered it fully, it definitely would have helped."

Concern

Kohli's poor form is another concern that must be addressed. The batter went hard at deliveries and tried to force the pace on an up-and-down New York surface, when it would have been more prudent to play late and close to the body.

Kohli will believe that his timing will return in the West Indies, where pitches will not be as seamer-friendly. Rathour stated that Kohli is now hungrier than ever to get it right.

"We have no concern at all (about Kohli's form). He had been batting superbly in the earlier tournament (IPL 2024). A couple of dismissals here doesn't change anything.

"Actually, it is good that he is a little hungrier. He is really keen to do well, and really switched on. It's a good space to be as a batter."

The standings

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
GROUP-A						
India (Q)	4	3	0	1	7	1.137
USA (Q)	4	2	1	1	5	0.127
Pakistan	4	2	2	0	4	0.294
Canada	4	1	2	1	3	-0.493
Ireland	4	0	3	1	1	-1.293
GROUP-B						
Australia (Q)	4	4	0	0	8	2.791
England (Q)	4	2	1	1	5	3.611
Scotland	4	2	1	1	5	1.255
Namibia	4	1	3	0	2	-2.585
Oman	4	0	4	0	0	-3.062
GROUP-C						
Afghanistan (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	4.230
West Indies (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	2.596
New Zealand	3	1	2	0	2	-0.241
Uganda	4	1	3	0	2	-4.510
Papua New Guinea	3	0	3	0	0	-0.886
GROUP-D						
South Africa (Q)	4	4	0	0	8	0.470
Bangladesh	3	2	1	0	4	0.478
Netherlands	3	1	2	0	2	-0.408
Nepal	3	0	2	1	1	-0.293
Sri Lanka	3	0	2	1	1	-0.777

Q: Qualified

Shaheen and Babar do it for Pakistan

Agence France-Presse
LAUDERHILL

Shaheen Afridi took three wickets and then hit two sixes to win the game as Pakistan ended a disappointing T20 World Cup with a three-wicket win over Ireland on Sunday.

Ireland recovered from a poor start to make 106 for nine with Gareth Delany making a 19-ball 31 and although Pakistan wobbled, captain Babar Azam's unbeaten 32 off 34 balls steadied the ship and took the side home.

The scores:
Ireland 106/9 in 20 overs (Delany 31, Shaheen 3/22, Amir 2/11, Imad 3/8) lost to Pakistan 111/7 in 18.5 overs (Babar 32 n.o., McCarthy 3/15, Campher 2/24).
Toss: Pakistan.
PoM: Shaheen.

Today's matches

St. Vincent, 5.00 a.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD T20Is
Played: 1
Bangladesh 1 | Nepal 0

St. Lucia, 6.00 a.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD T20Is
Played: 3
Sri Lanka 3 | Netherlands 0

New Zealand vs Papua New Guinea
Tarouba, 8.00 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD T20Is
First Meeting

Nervy chase: Shaheen's sixes eased the pressure. K.R. DEEPAK

Smriti's century powers India to a massive win

SA IN INDIA

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Smriti Mandhana's splendid 117 (127b, 12x4, 1x6) – her sixth ODI century and first at home – carried India to a thumping 143-run victory over South Africa in the first of three 50-over Internationals at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Sunday.

Opting to bat, India made 265, a fine recovery after being 99 for five at one stage. South Africa never looked like chasing the total, folding for 122 as debutant leggie Asha Sobhana, 33, finished with four wickets (8.4-2-21-4).

Skipper Laura Wolvaardt was dismissed in the very first over, with Renuka Singh getting one to nip back and clip the top of off-stump. Pooja Vastrakar trapped Anneke Bosch in front before offie Deepti Sharma forced Tazmin Brits to slice to point.

Marizanne Kapp resisted (24, 39b, 1x4, 1x6), but Asha floated one wide and had her caught by Harmanpreet Kaur at cover. Annerie Dercksen and Sune Luus (33, 58b, 4x4) soon followed Kapp and the contest was as good as over.

Smart batting: Smriti eschewed gushy shot-making and waited to execute her strokes. K. MURALI KUMAR

The lone bit of worry for India was the injury to Pooja, who went off the field in the 18th over after seemingly hurting her left knee. Smriti, in the post-match press conference however, said it could just be a case of cramps.

Earlier, during an afternoon when the sun played hide and seek, the visiting bowlers found some swing in the air and some purchase off the wicket. And the trio of Shafali Verma, D. Hemalatha and Harmanpreet was duly out trying the expansive.

Smriti, though, eschewed gushy shot-making and waited to execute some exquisite cover-drives, pitch-perfect pulls and a couple of smart lofted strokes. The 27-year-old put on 37 runs with Jemimah Rodrigues (17, 28b, 1x4), 81 with Deepti Sharma (37, 48b, 3x4) and 58 with Pooja (31 n.o., 42b, 3x4). The half-century took 61 balls and the hundred 116, with the six over mid-on off medium-pacer Masabata Klaas to move from 93 to 99 her best shot.

South Africa didn't help itself with some below par ground fielding. It also conceded 17 extras to just one from India.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA
Shafali Verma c Jafta b Klaas 7 (*12b, 1x4*), Smriti Mandhana c Luus b Klaas 117 (*127b, 12x4, 1x6*), D. Hemalatha c Shangase b Mlaba 12 (*16b, 1x4*), Harmanpreet Kaur c Wolvaardt b Dercksen 10 (*11b, 1x4*), Jemimah Rodrigues c Kapp b Shangase 17 (*28b, 1x4*), Richa Ghosh c Jafta b Khaka 3 (*5b*), Deepti Sharma b Khaka 37 (*48b, 3x4*), Pooja Vastrakar (not out) 31 (*42b, 3x4*), Radha Yadav c Mlaba b Khaka 6 (*7b*), Asha Sobhana (not out) 8 (*5b, 1x4*); Extras (b-3, lb-1, nb-1, w-12): 17; Total (for eight wkts. in 50 overs): 265.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-15 (Shafali, 3.2 overs), 2-32 (Hemalatha 8.2), 3-55 (Harmanpreet, 11.2), 4-92 (Jemimah, 20.2), 5-99 (Richa, 21.5), 6-180 (Deepti, 37.1), 7-238 (Smriti, 46.1), 8-252 (Radha, 48.5).

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING
Khaka 10-0-47-3, Klaas 10-0-51-2, Dercksen 10-0-60-1, Mlaba 8-0-38-1, Shangase 10-0-54-1, Bosch 2-0-11-0.

SOUTH AFRICA
Laura Wolvaardt b Renuka 4 (*4b, 1x4*), Tazmin Brits c Radha b Deepti 18 (*31b, 3x4*), Anneke Bosch lbw b Pooja 5 (*13b, 1x4*), Sune Luus lbw b Deepti 33 (*58b, 4x4*), Marizanne Kapp c Harmanpreet b Asha 24 (*39b, 1x4, 1x6*), Annerie Dercksen run out 1 (*12b*), Nondumiso Shangase lbw b Radha 8 (*24b, 1x4*), Sinalo Jafta (not out) 27 (*30b, 4x4*), Masabata Klaas c Radha b Asha 1 (*5b*), Nonkululeko Mlaba b Asha 0 (*3b*), Ayabonga Khaka c Richa b Asha 0 (*7b*); Extras (lb-1): 1; Total (in 37.4 overs): 122.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-4 (Wolvaardt, 0.4 overs), 2-21 (Bosch, 5.2), 3-33 (Brits, 10.1), 4-72 (Kapp, 21.3), 5-74 (Dercksen, 23.4), 6-92 (Luus, 28.3), 7-103 (Shangase, 32.5), 8-120 (Klaas, 35.3), 9-120 (Mlaba, 35.6).

INDIA BOWLING
Renuka 7-0-30-1, Pooja 4-1-11-1, Deepti 6-0-10-2, Radha 10-0-32-1, Asha 8.4-2-21-4, Harmanpreet 2-0-17-0.

Toss: India; **PoM:** Smriti.
India won by 143 runs.

Italy and the Netherlands fightback for opening wins

Super sub: Weghorst, left, scores moments after coming on for the Dutch against Poland. AP

EURO2024 GERMANY

Associated Press
DORTMUND

Italy recovered from conceding the quickest goal in European Championship history – after just 23 seconds – to open its title defence with a 2-1 win over Albania on Saturday.

Nedim Bajrami pounced on a throw-in by Italy left back Federico Dimarco that failed to reach teammate Alessandro Bastoni, before taking a touch and smashing a rising shot inside the near post.

Within 16 minutes, the Italians were ahead as Bastoni headed in Lorenzo Pellegrini's cross in the 11th and then Nicolo Barella struck home a first-time shot from the edge of the area.

On Sunday, substitute Wout Weghorst snatched an 83rd-minute winner as the Netherlands fought its way back to beat Poland 2-1 in the Group D opener.

Weghorst had barely been on the field when he finished an expert pass from Nathan Ake to secure a deserved three points.

Poland shocked with a 16th-minute header from striker Adam Buksa.

A deserved Dutch equaliser came 13 minutes later as Cody Gakpo's shot took a deflection off Bartosz Salamon.

The results: Group B: Italy 2 (Bastoni 11, Barella 16) bt Albania 1 (Bajrami 1).
Group C: Slovenia 1 (Janza 77) drew with Denmark 1 (Eriksen 17).
Group D: Poland 1 (Buksa 16) lost to Netherlands 2 (Gakpo 29, Weghorst 83).

INBRIEF

Zii Jia and Ohori crowned Australian Open champions

Malaysian Lee Zii Jia outlasted Japan's Kodai Naraoka in the men's singles final to be crowned Australian Open badminton champion, while Aya Ohori of Japan clinched the women's title, in Sydney on Sunday. World No. 8 Zii Jia took advantage to upset his sixth-ranked opponent 21-19, 11-21, 21-18, while Ohori triumphed with a gutsy 17-21, 21-19, 21-16 come-from-behind win over Indonesian teenager Ester Nurumi Tri Wardoyo.

Ferrari wins second straight Le Mans 24 Hours race

Ferrari won a wild and wet 92nd edition of the Le Mans 24 Hours race on Sunday. Nicklas Nielsen took the chequered flag after a vintage and gruelling race, the Dane sharing driving duties in the Italian constructor's No. 50 car with Italian Antonio Fuoco and Spaniard Miguel Molina. Toyota took second with Ferrari's No. 51, which triumphed last year, completing the podium.

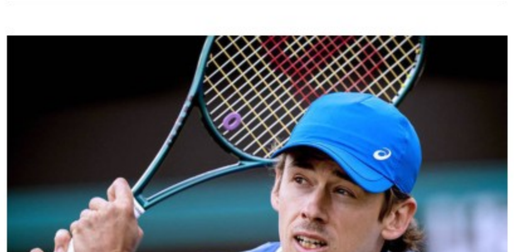
Gretchen Walsh sets 100m butterfly World record

Gretchen Walsh shattered the 100m butterfly world record on Saturday, clocking 55.18 seconds in the semifinals at the US Olympic swimming trials in Indianapolis. The US collegiate standout gunning for a Paris Olympics berth broke the record of 55.48 set by Sweden's Sarah Sjoestroem at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Meanwhile, Katie Ledecky qualified for her fourth Olympics with a victory in the 400m freestyle.

Indian women finish fifth, men sixth in Asian squash

The Indian women's team finished fifth and the men's outfit took the sixth place in the Asian team squash championships, which concluded at Dalian (China) on Sunday. The women defeated Iran 2-0 in the match to decide the fifth and sixth positions while the men lost to South Korea 1-2.

The results: 5-6 positions: Men: India lost to South Korea 1-2 (Velavan Senthilkumar bt Jeongmin Ryu 11-5, 11-1, 11-4; Suraj Kumar Chand lost to Minwoo Lee 11-7, 11-13, 9-11, 8-11; Om Semwal lost to Jooyoung Na 9-11, 6-11, 9-11).
Women: India bt Iran 2-0 (Rathika Suthanthira Seelan bt Fereshteh Eghtedari 11-5, 11-9, 11-7; Pooja Arthi Raghu bt Parmin Nekopayantak 11-5, 11-7, 12-10).



de Minaur clinches 's-Hertogenbosch title

Australian top seed Alex De Minaur defeated American Sebastian Korda 6-2, 6-4 to win the 's-Hertogenbosch grass-court Wimbledon warm-up on Sunday. The straight-sets win in the Netherlands ensured the 25-year-old will reach a career-high world ranking of seven.

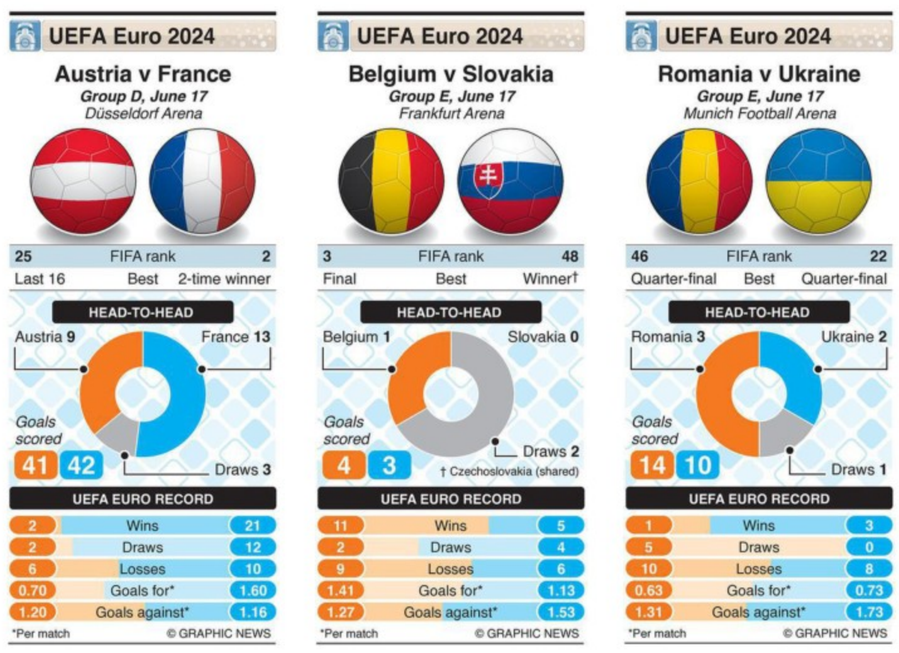
LIVE TELECAST

Euro 2024: Sony Sports Ten 2, 3, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6.30, 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Tuesday)
T20 World Cup: Star Sports 1, 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m. & 6 a.m. (Tuesday)

Will France find the missing piece to complete Deschamps' cabinet at last?

Whatever happens, he has left an indelible mark on the French national team; Now if he wants to make a bit more history we need to do something this summer, because the Euros is the only thing he is missing as a coach, says Mbappe

Leading by example: Newly-named captain Mbappe will hope to recreate his multiple World Cup heroics to take France to its third triumph. AP



UEFA EURO2024 GERMANY

Agence France-Presse
DUSSELDORF

The European championship is the one title that has evaded the French since Didier Deschamps became coach in 2012. France and Kylian Mbappe are on a mission to round off their trophy cabinet as they begin their Euro 2024 campaign against Austria on Monday.

Runner-up as host in 2016, when it agonisingly lost the final in extra time to Portugal. Deschamps's side went out of the delayed Euro 2020 in the last 16, squandering a 3-1 lead before losing on penalties to Switzerland.

"Whatever happens, he has left an indelible mark on the French national team," Mbappe said of Deschamps in an interview with regional daily Ouest-France.

"Now if he wants to make a bit more history we need to do something this summer, because the Euros is the only thing he is missing as a coach."

France is arguably the standout candidate to lift the trophy on July 14 in Berlin.

The French have not fully convinced in recent outings, including a goalless draw with Canada last weekend.

Nevertheless, there are explanations for that and there is hope *Les Bleus* will find their best form in Germany. Deschamps has been making tactical adjustments which always require time to be assimilated.

Different look

There is something of a different look to France's left side, with Theo Hernandez likely to play in an advanced full-back role behind Marcus Thuram.

The Inter Milan forward is set to start on the flank with Mbappe through the middle, with Olivier Giroud no longer a starter.

Then there is the return of N'Golo Kante, now aged 33 and playing in Saudi Arabia. He missed the 2022 World Cup with injury but was recalled by Deschamps after two years out of the fold and is set to start against Austria.

His experience, and that of Giroud, could prove crucial in a young squad featuring 11 players aged 25 or under.

"I am full of excitement, nostalgia and desire. The main objective is to have the best competition possible," said Giroud as he prepares for his last major tournament.

There are questions about their central defence, but William Saliba is aiming to cement himself in the eleven on the back of a stellar club season.

"We are all relaxed. Our ambitions have not changed. Just because we are calm it doesn't mean we are going to win the Euros, but we'll do everything we can," said winger Kingsley Coman.

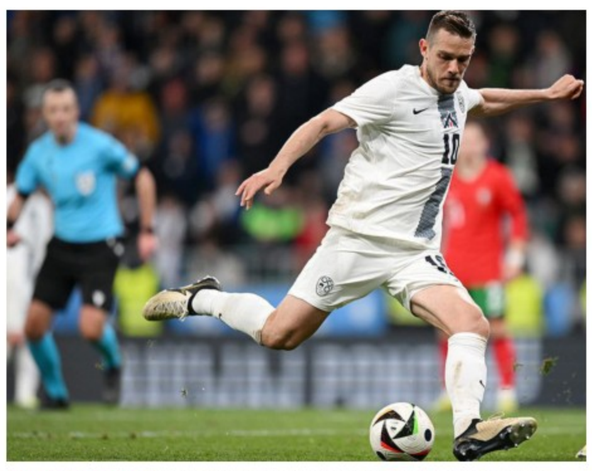
Slovenia looks to fellow athletes for inspiration

Agence France-Presse
STUTTGART

Slovenias Timi Max Elsnik said the success of other sporting compatriots like two-time Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar and NBA star Luka Doncic gives the team plenty of motivation going into Euro 2024.

Olimpija Ljubljana midfielder Elsnik is one of three home-based players in the squad as Slovenia return to the European Championship for the first time since making their debut at the tournament 24 years ago.

"Slovenia is a phenomenon when it comes to sports," said Elsnik. "Football maybe wasn't the most important sport the last couple of years, but we have reached the Euros and maybe it will rejoin other sports in Slovenia again."



Means business: Elsnik insists that Slovenia is not there just to make up the numbers. GETTY IMAGES

Slovenia have also played at two World Cups -- in 2002 and 2010 -- and are aiming to spring a surprise over Denmark in their opening game in Stuttgart on Sunday.

"The number of messages you get, the faces of people in the street show everything, the Euros mean a lot to the people," said Elsnik. "Slovenia is a small country and every sporting success is important for the country."

They will also face Serbia and England in a challenging Group C, but Elsnik insists they are not in Germany just to make up the numbers.

Ukraine will want to start strong against Romania

Associated Press
MUNICH

Ukraine will look to back up its most successful campaign to date, having reached the quarterfinals at Euro 2020, by beating Romania in its group opener in Munich on Monday.

Ukraine earned a reputation as comeback kings in the playoffs as a late goal saw it come from behind to beat both Bosnia-Herzegovina 2-1 in the semifinal, and then Iceland

Romania impressed in qualifying, sailing through unbeaten to top a group that also contained Switzerland and Israel. Edward Iordanescu will become the first coach to lead a Romania team at a European Championship since his father Anghel in 2016.

Ukraine left-back Vitaliy Mykolenko injured his ankle in the last warm-up match before the tournament but coach Serhiy Rebrov is hopeful it is not serious. Should Mykolenko not recover in time he will likely be replaced by Oleksandr Zinchenko, who plays as left back for Arsenal but more often in midfield for the national side.

Beacon of hope: War-torn Ukraine will want to give fans back home something to cheer about. AFP

Romania has not reached the knockout stages in 24 years, since losing 2-0 to eventual runner-up Italy in the quarterfinals at Euro 2000. Romania surprised England at that tournament, beating it 3-2 in the group stage. That is Romania's only win at a European championship, having drawn five matches and lost its other 10.

The teams have met six times before, but never at a major tournament. Romania has a slight edge with three wins to Ukraine's two, but the last of those was more than 20 years ago.

Bhajan wins gold, helps earn recurve women's individual quota in the Antalya qualifier

ARCHERY

Sports Bureau

Asian Games team bronze medallist archer Bhajan Kaur claimed a gold medal to help India earn a recurve women's individual quota place in the Final Olympic Qualifier in Antalya, Turkey, on Sunday.

Even as the seasoned second-ranked archer Deepika Kumari, who received two byes, lost her first match to Azerbaijan's Yaylagul Ramazanova 6-4, the third-ranked Bhajan and the ninth-placed Ankita Bhakat reached the quarterfinals to ensure a women's berth in Paris 2024.

As the event offers only one individual quota place to a country, India secured the slot through the higher-ranked Bhajan's fine performance.

The 18-year-old Bhajan got two byes and beat Mongolia's Urantungalag Bishindee 6-2, Slovakia's Ursa Cavic 7-3 and Poland's Wioleta Myszor 6-0 to achieve the first target of entering the quarterfinals. Then she continued her good touch to get past Moldova's Alexandra Mirca 6-2 in the semifinals and Iran's Mobina Fallah 6-2 in the final.

Ankita, who also got two byes, defeated Israel's Shelley Hilton 6-4 and Mikaella Moshe 7-3 and Philippines' Gabrielle Monica Bidaure 6-0 to enter the quarterfinals before coming up short against Mobina 6-4.

Indian men and women's teams had lost early to miss out on team quotas, which would have allowed the country to field three men and as many women in the Olympics.

However, both teams have another chance to qualify through the world rankings as they are placed at the top among the countries which have not secured team quotas yet.

For Test cricket to thrive, India has leadership role to play: CWI CEO Johnny Grave

Grave calls on the ICC to centralise flights and accommodation within the World Test Championship and take on those costs rather than placing the entire burden of travel on the participating teams

CRICKET

Press Trust of India
BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Test cricket remains in danger and powerhouse India has a "leadership role to play" in ensuring the five-day game not just survives but thrives in smaller regions like the West Indies, said CWI CEO Johnny Grave.

Grave, who joined Cricket West Indies (CWI) back in 2017, lauded the BCCI's unwavering commitment to Test cricket despite a gruelling calendar but said more needs to be done at the ICC level to protect the red-ball game outside the big three comprising India, England and Australia.

Only the big three out of the nine competing ICC full members will play a five-match series in the 2023-2025 World Test Championship cycle. Three full members – Ireland, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe – have never been part of the championship introduced in 2019.

Grave, currently busy with co-hosting the T20 World Cup, spoke his mind on future of the game and the role he expects the BCCI to play.

"India have a leadership role to play. They're now the number one board when it comes to power, influence, and resources. To date, they've been fantastic in how they've continued to play all three formats of the game, their commitment to Test cricket. I don't think it has ever been as strong as it is now," said Grave.

With the ICC being a members' body, the BCCI's stance on any subject carries huge significance. Is it doing enough in the leadership role?

"I think they are. They're becoming increasingly influential in the key decisions that the ICC makes. The BCCI were hugely supportive in one of the biggest things the ICC have achieved in the last 12 months, which is getting cricket back into the Olympics.

The orchestrator: Grave, seen with Walsh (left), credits India for being instrumental in bringing cricket back into the Olympic Games. FILE PHOTO

"The fact that India came on board and supported that bid was absolutely, in my opinion, crucial for the result that the ICC got, which was the acceptance of cricket into the LA Games.

"And we're already seeing from the associate world in particular, that being an Olympic sport has a very big impact on them positively in terms of how they can get money from government, get money from the Olympic associations to drive the game at all levels," he said referring to the sport's return to the Summer Games after 128 years.

India has toured the West Indies thrice in the last five years, providing a massive financial boost to the CWI, which depends on media rights money from Indian and English broadcasters to keep the game afloat in the Caribbean.

As of now, series in the WTC cycle are staged like bilateral rubbers with the home board pocketing all broadcast revenues and the visiting teams having to pay for their own travel.

Grave wants the ICC to centralise at least the travel costs as the West Indies have to spend the most in criss-crossing the world.

"We have to have a league mentality that we're all in it together as the Test playing nations. And I think the World Test Championship is a start to that. I think it's gaining some momentum. I think it can be improved.

"Centralise flights and accommodation within the World Test Championship and take on those costs as the costs of the league rather than placing all that burden on the participating teams as we're so negatively disadvantaged by that," said the CWI CEO.

In Grave's words, the CWI has not been in a better place financially after multiple tours from India and England in the post-COVID era. The T20 World Cup, which is the first ICC men's event held in the Caribbean since 2010, will also add to the coffers of CWI which generates an annual revenue of $50 million.

The six chosen venues needed urgent renovation for being World Cup ready and that has been done at a cost of $50 million approximately, with half of them spent on the Kensington Oval in Barbados, where the final will be staged.

"It's been 14 years since we hosted our last men's event. And it's hugely important (that we get to host world events).

"...(building infrastructure) It's a huge part of hosting a World Cup because the legacy of that means that the six grounds that are hosting or playing hosts for this World Cup will have facilities that we, Cricket West Indies and our home boards, can benefit from for hopefully the next decade," he said The West Indies are co-hosting the T20 showpiece with USA and going forward, more world events will be jointly hosted and not just by the big three, as it has been the case in the last 10 years.

"We made the point that we think there should be more equal revenue sharing of ICC distributions (India gets the lion share of that). And part of that equality was the spreading around the men's events.

"Some of the bigger host countries could be making a hundred million US dollars from hosting a men's events based on the revenues that they would keep. And, therefore, it's another way in which if you're not spreading around those events, that the few nations that do host are benefiting more than others, as well as getting the onfield home advantage and playing in home conditions that they should know better and be able to adapt better.

Great Britain's Andy Murray set for his fifth Olympics

Murray. GETTY IMAGES

TENNIS

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Andy Murray was on Sunday named as one of the four British singles players for the Paris Olympics, which will be his fifth Summer Games.

Murray, who said he intends to retire later this year, was granted an ITF place to compete at the French Open at Roland Garros despite his lowly singles ranking of 97 due to being a former Grand Slam winner and Olympic gold medallist.

Raducanu in the mix

Team GB was also notified on Thursday that 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu would be in the mix for an ITF place, but she turned down the chance due to the multiple changes in surface over the coming weeks and after only recently returning from a lengthy injury lay-off.

Murray, who won the Olympic gold at London 2012 and Rio in 2016, is one of four male singles players selected alongside Jack Draper, Cameron Norrie and Dan Evans, with Katie Boulter the sole female participant for Great Britain.

Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski will represent Team GB in the men's doubles and the pairing of Murray and Evans have been nominated for an additional space in that competition, which will be determined by the ITF on June 25.

Murray, who won the Olympic gold at London 2012 and Rio in 2016, is one of four male singles players selected alongside Draper, Norrie and Evans, with Boulter the sole female participant for Great Britain

We have let the nation down, says Mathews

Agence France-Presse
GROS-ISLET

All-rounder Angelo Mathews admitted that "we've let the entire nation down" as Sri Lanka suffered a first-round exit at the T20 World Cup. "First of all we've let the entire nation down and we are really sorry because we've also let ourselves down. We never expected this," said Mathews.

"We never expected this. We came across a lot of challenges but those are not something to sort of worry about, but it's unfortunate that we didn't make the second round."

Mathews played a key role in his country's 2014 World Cup victory, scoring 40 runs in the semi-final against West Indies and taking 1-25 in the six-wicket win over India in the final at Dhaka.

Sri Lanka will have just pride at stake when they meet the Dutch on Sunday. Mathews, who will be playing in his 90th T20I, insists his team won't under-estimate Netherlands.

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

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(Only through KPP portal)

BWSSB invites Tenders from Registered agencies for the following works.

Office of the Chief Engineer(North), 2nd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount Put to Tender(Rs.) / EMD Amount(Rs.)	Last date & Time for submission of tender	Date and time for opening of tender
1	North-2	BWSSB/ENTE/AE-1/246/ 2024-25 Dated: 11.06.2024	Rs. 82,72,154/- / Rs. 1,95,230/-	02.07.2024 upto 3:00 pm	03.07.2024 after 4:00 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (North-2)

Office of the Chief Engineer(WWM-East), 5th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.

2	WWM-STP (K&T)Valley	BWSSB/EE(WWM-STP)K&T/AE/151/ 2024-25 Dated: 10.06.2024	Rs. 37,50,000/- / Rs. 88,500/-	24.06.2024 upto 4:00 pm	25.06.2024 at 4:05 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-STP) K&T Valley

Office of the Chief Engineer (Design & QA), 9th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.

3	DC & BM	BWSSB/EE(DC&BM)/PB/202/ 2024-25 Dated: 12.06.2024	Rs. 83,03,504/- / Rs. 1,66,070/-	25.06.2024 upto 4:00 pm	26.06.2024 after 4:00 pm
4		BWSSB/EE(DC&BM)/PB/204/ 2024-25 Dated: 12.06.2024	Rs. 8,39,508/- / Rs. 25,000/-		
5		BWSSB/EE(DC&BM)/PB/206/ 2024-25 Dated: 12.06.2024	Rs. 10,53,271/- / Rs. 26,500/-		
6		BWSSB/EE(DC&BM)/PB/208/ 2024-25 Dated: 12.06.2024	Rs. 21,23,710/- / Rs. 50,000/-		
7		BWSSB/EE(DC&BM)/PB/210/ 2024-25 Dated: 12.06.2024	Rs. 12,99,887/- / Rs. 32,500/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (DC & BM)

Office of the Chief Engineer(Project), 3rd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.

8	Central Stores	BWSSB/EEST/AEE/ASO/AE/151/ 2024-25 Dated: 14.06.2024	Rs. 46,08,000/- / Rs. 92,160/-	17.07.2024 upto 4:00 pm	19.07.2024 at 5:00 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Central Stores)

Office of the Chief Engineer(South), 7th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.

9	South-2	BWSSB/EE(S2)/AE/228/ 2024-25 Dated: 12.06.2024	Rs. 5,90,745/- / Rs. 51,700/-	03.07.2024 upto 4:00 pm	05.07.2024 after 4:00 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (South-2)

Office of the Chief Engineer(WWM-West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.

10	(WWM-N) H&AV	BWSSB/EE(WWM-N)H&AV/PB/198/ 2024-25 Dated: 15.06.2024(2nd Call)	Rs. 72,18,000/- / Rs. 1,44,360/-	25.06.2024 upto 3:00 pm	26.06.2024 after 3:30 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-N) H&AV

The details regarding the tender and participatin in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

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THREE YEAR LL.B. ADMISSION NOTIFICATION
DSNLU invites application(s) for DSNLU Entrance Test (DET) for admission into Three Year LL.B. Course for the Academic Year 2024-2025. Interested candidates can apply through ONLINE MODE only by paying the application fee (Rs.2,500/- for OC, Rs.2,200/- for BC/OBC and Rs.1,800/- for SC & ST candidates) through Registrar, DSNLU Account on or before 12.07.2024. The detailed information regarding DSNLU Entrance Test (DET) is available on the website www.dsnlu.ac.in.
Date: 07.06.2024
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Online applications through CMC website will be considered. Applications through any other means will not be entertained.
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LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE LXVIII ADDITIONAL CITY CIVIL & SESSIONS JUDGE AT BENGALURU (CCH-69)
O.S.No. 5281/2023
Between:
M/s. ICICI Bank Limited, having its registered office at: Landmark, Race-Course Circle, Vadodara-390007, having its head office at and Zonal office at: 4/10, My three Tower, Bommanahalli, Hosur Main Road, Bengaluru-560068 and also having branch at M.G. Road, Bengaluru, through its Authorised representative
Mr. Harish E. ...Plaintiff
And
Mr. Umair Ulla Khan ...Defendant
SUMMONS TO DEFENDANT BY WAY OF PAPER PUBLICATION UNDER ORDER V RULE 20 OF CPC
Defendant :
Mr. Umair Ulla Khan
S/o. Inayath Ulla Khan,
Proprietor of LIMRA M.I.S. CARS, Aged About 35 Years, R/at. No. 304, Pyramid Classic Apartment, 3rd Floor, 3rd Cross, New Gurupana Palya, B.G. Road, Opp. Huda School, Bangalore- 560029
Whereas the plaintiff above named has instituted the above suit for recovery of money for sum of Rs. 13,08,344.18/- along with interest at the rate of 24% P.A. against you, and you are summoned to appear before the LXVIII Addl. City Civil & Sessions Judge at Bengaluru (C.C.H.-69), in person or by a pleader, on the day of 12-07-24 at 11:00 A.M. to answer the claim, failing to which the suit would be disposed of Ex-Parte.
day of June Given under my hand and seal of the court on this the 11th day of june 2024 at Bangalore.
By order of the Court,
Assistant Registrar,
Hon'ble City Civil Court, Bengaluru
Advocate for Plaintiff
B.S. Jeevan Kumar
Vidhll Partners, Advocates,
No. 701, Queens Corner 'A', 3, Queens Road, Bengaluru-01

SITUATION VACANT
GENERAL

CHRISTIAN MEDICAL COLLEGE
Ida Scudder Road, Vellore.
SITUATION VACANT
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSFUSION MEDICINE & IMMUNOHAEMATOLOGY
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Salary Scale : As per Institutional Rules
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Applications are to be done only through the online application system. Please log on to https://www.cmch-vellore.edu/JobVacancy.aspx?jtype=ALL Link: "Vacancies".
Hard Copies and emails will not be accepted.
Applications will close by 29.06.2024.

On a roll: Former champion DeChambeau came up with five birdies in 10 holes. AP

DeChambeau leads by three strokes after a birdie spree

Four-time Major winner McIlroy, Pavon, and Cantlay share second place

US OPEN GOLF

Agence France-Presse
PINEHURST

Bryson DeChambeau reeled off five birdies in 10 holes to seize command of the US Open, grabbing a three-stroke lead after Saturday's third round at a punishing Pinehurst.

Only eight players were under par after 54 holes as the perils of the 7,548-yard layout took a toll, dome-shaped elevated greens with dirt and weeds waste areas crushing many hopes.

Double bogey

DeChambeau, the 2020 US Open winner and last month's PGA Championship runner-up, made bogey at the fourth, then unleashed his birdie blitz.

After a double-bogey at 16, he sank a birdie putt from just inside 12 feet at the par-3 17th and parred 18. "Amazing. Made a lot of great putts," DeChambeau said. "Pleased with how I struck it for the most part. Got to work on that just a little bit, but I feel pretty confident over the tee shots."

Four-time Major winner Rory McIlroy, trying to snap a 10-year Major win drought, and Matthieu Pavon, trying to become the first Frenchman to win a Major since 1907, each shot 69 to share second on 206 along with ninth-ranked American Patrick Cantlay, who fired a 70, aided by a 19-foot birdie putt at 17.

Japan's Hideki Matsuyama, the 2021 Masters champion, fired a 70 to share fifth on 208 with Sweden's sixth-ranked Ludvig Aberg, who led after 36 holes before struggling to a 73.

DeChambeau made a six-foot birdie putt at the par-5 fifth, added a 12-foot birdie putt at the seventh, a seven-foot birdie putt at the par-5 10th and a birdie putt from just beyond 13 feet at 11 to leap into the lead.

DeChambeau curled in a nine-foot birdie putt at 14 but stumbled at 16, needing four to reach the green, but answering the double bogey with the birdie at 17.

"When that pressure is on and I execute like I know how I can, there's no better feeling in the world," DeChambeau said.

Top-ranked Scottie Scheffler was 13 strokes adrift, the huge pre-event favorite firing a 71 to stand on six-over 216 through 54 holes.

Leading scores (after three rounds): 203: Bryson DeChambeau 67-69-67.

206: Matthieu Pavon 67-70-69, Rory McIlroy 65-72-69, Patrick Cantlay (USA) 65-71-70.

208: Hideki Matsuyama 72-66-70, Ludvig Aberg 66-69-73.

209: Tyrrell Hatton 68-71-70, Tony Finau 68-69-72.

210: Collin Morikawa 70-74-66, Corey Conners 69-70-71, Kim Joo-hyung 71-68-71.

Showman DeChambeau scripting success without bulk of the past

Agence France-Presse
PINEHURST

Bryson DeChambeau has gone from being a bulked-up long driver to become a more all-round golfer and finds himself in position to win his first Major title since the switch.

DeChambeau, the 2020 US Open winner, fired a three-under 67 to grab a three-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the US Open, handling Pinehurst with putting precision and strategic thinking.

It's a far cry from four years ago, when he won his first Major crown with huge muscles and weight work, with the idea to bash the ball as far as possible, then turn the distance edge into birdies and victories.

"Just thinking back three years ago, the landscape was a lot different. I tried to show everybody who I was. I didn't do it the right way and could have done a lot of things better," DeChambeau said.

"I'm lucky enough to have a great team around me to help me move in the right direction. Those combination of things have allowed me to not only have a new perspective but an opportunity to show myself in a different light and to entertain the fans."

New avatar: DeChambeau says he has changed his mindset and is moving in the right direction. REUTERS

It's that entertainer role he has embraced since joining Saudi-backed LIV Golf. Now he could become LIV's second active player to win a Major after Brooks Koepka at last year's PGA Championship.

"You're trying to play conservative golf that gives you the opportunity to hit it close in some scenarios," DeChambeau said of his style this week. Showman DeChambeau kept the crowd roaring with shots and style, pumping fists on a day when many fought to stay calm or had little to be happy about on the formidable course.

"It was amazing. I can't thank them enough. It was a blessing. Man, they riled me up," DeChambeau said.

"It just gives me a spike in my adrenaline and allows me to focus more on delivering for the fans and for myself and for my family. It just inspires me."

DeChambeau said he doesn't regret the time he spent on science tests of body and equipment.

"It's a learning experience. I never regret anything. Do I not like what I did? Absolutely. But every moment I live in this life, I'm always trying to learn from my mistakes," he said. "Could you have called it a mistake? Sure. You can call it a bunch of things. But for the most part, the most important piece of it all is that you're growing and learning from those moments."

DeChambeau played down a hip issue that struck on a couple shots, soreness he blames on working to finish a new house.

"It was tougher to get through on a couple shots. It's OK. I've had it for a long time now. It's just something that popped up," said DeChambeau. "I've been playing a lot of good golf and working on my house, so I haven't really had time to rest like I want. I've just been pushing myself a little bit. Consequently that's going to happen. But I've got a great team around me to help fix some stuff up."

Dessai, right, with Chennaiyin head coach Coyle.

Chennaiyin inks deal with defender Dessai

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Chennaiyin FC has signed experienced Indian defender Mandar Rao Dessai on a two-year contract that will keep him with the club till 2026. Dessai is regarded as one of the most successful players in the Indian Super League (ISL), having won the league title in 2021 with Mumbai City FC and three League Shields – one with FC Goa (2020) and two with Mumbai City (2021 and 2023).

The 32-year-old became Chennaiyin's seventh signing of the summer.

"Chennaiyin is a champion club. They always tried to have a good team," said Dessai.

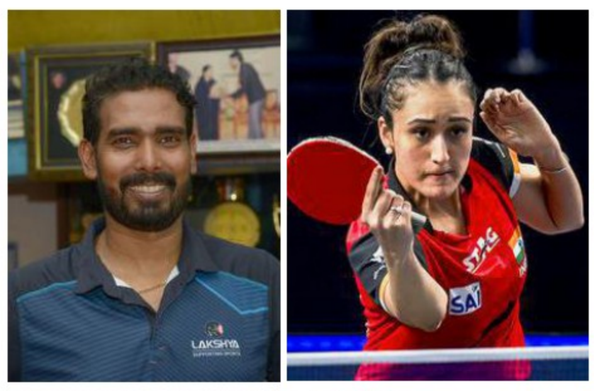
Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra retained by their respective teams in Ultimate Table Tennis

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Experienced Indian paddlers A. Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra were on Sunday retained by their respective franchises for the upcoming edition of Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) to be held in Chennai from August 22 to September 7.

Sharath will continue to represent last season's runner-up side Chennai Lions, while Manika will play for Bengaluru Smashers.

Defending champion Goa Challengers has retained Harmeet Desai, who played a pivotal role in its success last season, while G. Sathiyan will continue with Dabang Delhi TTC.



Sharath and Manika. FILE PHOTOS: M. VEDHAM & PTI

U Mumba TT has also extended its association with talented youngster Manav Thakkar for yet another season.

The tournament will be an eight-team competition for the first time, with Ahmedabad SG Pipers and Jaipur Patriots being the latest additions.

The six existing franchises were allowed to retain one Indian player, with Puneri Paltan TT deciding not to retain anyone.

Newcomers SG Pipers and Patriots will select a player of their choice in the opening round of the player draft. The first round will have only three picks.

All eight franchises have selected a foreigner and an Indian coach from the coach draft and will now be focusing on building a six-player squad, which will have four Indians and two foreigners – one male and one female.

With the arrival of the two new sides, the tournament format changes as the eight teams will now be split into two groups of four each.

Each franchise will play five ties during the league stage, facing the other three teams within their respective group and two randomly selected teams from the other group once.

The top two teams from each group will then qualify for the semifinals.